S T A M P E D E

A Play in Three Acts

by

Gwen Pharis

This play was written under the terms of the Alberta Folklore and History Project.

The royalty fee for this three-act play is $20.00 per performance and individual copies of the script cost 45¢ each.

Stampede was first produced by the University of Alberta Drama Society in March, 1946 under the direction of Sydney Risk, Director of Drama, University of Alberta

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Author's note:

I hope that those old timers who knew and loved John Ware ("Nigger John") will find in this play a tribute to a great Albertan.

Part of the story has been based on fact, part of it is fiction. Certain liberties have been taken with the time of some of the events portrayed here. My desire in writing "Stampede" was to tell a story that would recall the last years of the great ranching era in this province, a story based on some of Alberta's cowboy legend.

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Act I: A camp site on a cattle trail leading North to Calgary.

Act II: The living-room of Ma Raybourne's boarding house in Calgary.

Act III: An enclosure behind the Chutes at the first Calgary Stampede.

TIME:

Act I: Mid-summer, 1912. Evening

Act II: A week later. Early evening.

Act III: The next day. The last afternoon of the Stampede.

CHARACTERS:

Lonesome
Jim, the cook of the Bar X Y
Slim
Larry
John Ware (Nigger John)
Bud
Shark
Shorthorn, Foreman of the Bar X Y
Pete, cowboy from the Bar O 7
Ma Raybourne
Celia
White Calf
Beanie
Lollie
Bertie
Suzanne
Betsy
A Man
A Woman
A Child
Vendor
1st Girl
2nd Girl
A U. S. Marshall
A Policeman
Announcer
Other spectators at the Stampede

MUSIC FOR STAMPEDE

Arrangements of authentic cowboy songs might be played as an overture, between the acts, and at the close of the play. If this is done the music should seem to be an integral part of the production and should be in keeping with the spirit of the play.

Songs used in the script were taken from Cowboy Songs edited by E. J. Lomox (Published by McMillan, 1938) and were used with the editor's permission. Anyone producing the play should ask permission from Mr. Lomox to use the songs, and a programme note should acknowledge their source.

The songs used, with their melodies, are as follows:

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(If the director is interested he may find other songs that can be substituted)

STAMPEDE

ACT I

SCENE: A camp site on a cattle trail leading North to Calgary.

TIME: Mid-summer, 1912.

SETTING: A few Scrub poplars, a small knoll at back, some shrubs and rocks, a camp fire, the bed rolls of several of the riders, their saddles, and the tongue and entrance or the rear entrance of the Chuck Wagon, comprise the "furnishings" of the setting.

When the curtain rises LONESOME is discovered seated on his bed roll up right from the camp fire. He is strumming on a banjo or guitar and singing "Doney Gal". There are no particular cowboy mannerisms in his singing, just the pleasing effect of a good though untrained voice, singing about the life he knows.

Jim, the cook, is busy with preparations for the evening meal.

LONESOME: (Singing)
We're alone, Doney Gal, in the rain and hail
Got to drive these dogies down the trail.

We'll ride the range from sun to sun
For a cowboy's work is never done.
He's up and gone at the break of day
Drivin' the dogies on their weary way.

(Chorus) It's rain or shine, sleet or snow,
Me and my Doney Gal are bound to go.
Yes, rain or shine, sleet or snow,
Me and my Doney Gal are bound to go.

A cowboy's life is a weary thing,
For its rope and brand and ride and sing;
Yes, day or night in the rain or hail,
He'll stay with his dogies on the trail.

JIM: (Who has completed arrangements for the evening meal, goes up to the top of the rise and calls.) Grub Pile! Come and Get it! Come and Get It! (Turning to LONESOME) Where are them buzzards anyway?

LONESOME: Bedding down the herd, I reckon. (He continues singing)

Travelling up the Lonesome Trail,
Where a man and his horse seldom ever fail;
Jogging along through fog and dew,
Wish for sunny days and you.

JIM: (Grumbling half to himself, half to LONESOME.) They're slower'n molasses in January. (Calling again.) Hey, you fellers, Grub's on! Come a-runnin'.

LARRY: (Running in, he trips on a tree root and falls at

LARRY: Jim's feet.) Oh, I beg your pardon. Excuse me.

JIM: You must be hungry, youngster.

LARRY: Starved, but I can't eat now. I got to take Shorthorn his gun. We saw a coyote down in the coulee.

JIM: Wait, I'll get it for you. (He reaches inside the chuck wagon and brings out a 30 30 carbine.) There you are. And you tell that foreman for me that he'll have to eat coyote for supper, if he don't get in here pretty soon.

LARRY: We won't be long. Maybe Shorthorn will let me shoot him. (Larry starts to run off. Jim shouts at him.)

JIM: Hey, you, wait a minute. Ain't there nothing but bone between your ears? Now point that gun down and don't run, you hear me.

LARRY: Right, Sir. I mean--Certainly, I sure as hell will. (He goes off in some confusion.)

JIM: How's he doing, anyway?

LONESOME: Not bad, for the first week. Shorthorn gave him Daisy and he can handle her. But God, he's green, talks like a book.

JIM: Does he yell Yippee?

LONESOME: I been waiting for it. (Looking in the pot). Not beans again! What a nice surprise!

JIM: Quit your beefin'. We're just out of caviar.

LONESOME: (Breaking into the musical call.)
Beans in the pan. Coffee in the pot.
Come on now and git it while it's hot.

SLIM: (Entering) Well, well, our little meadow lark!
(He pats LONESOME on the head.) Hi, Jim. Hope you got plenty. I'm gant as a gutted snow bird.

JIM: There was plenty once. May be petrified by now.

SLIM: (Arranging his bed roll and saddle.) Did you have a nice rest, Lonesome?

LONESOME: Who has to sing to them babies all night tonight? Me.

SLIM: Saw old Chief White Calf and his family back there.

LONESOME: Going to the Stampede too, eh?

SLIM: Yeah. He tells me there's riders coming from all over, far as Mexico, to enter.

SHARK: (Coming in in time to hear SLIM) That's right, Slim. They'll show you prairie dogs some riding, too.

SLIM: Sure, Shark, sure. Up here we've never seen any real horsemanship. Our horses are all born halter broke. And our steers just lie down and let us rope them, don't they Bud?

(Bud has entered with his saddle. NIGGER JOHN is behind him).

BUD: I didn't think that one-eyed black was ever going to lie down. I finally tied him though, didn't I, John.

NIGGER JOHN: You were good, Bud.

BUD: Good as Shorthorn?

SHARK: Better.

NIGGER JOHN: No. You're nearly as fast, boy, but you haven't got his style.

SHARK: Hah! Don't you believe it. Just because Shorthorn's foreman of this outfit, you don't need to lick his boots.

LONESOME: What are you tying up old One-Eye for?

NIGGER JOHN: He's been making the herd awful jumpy ever since we started drivin'. He can't see and he's feared of his own shadow. We staked him over the hill.

JIM: Come on, you fellows. Do you think I want to wait all night to wash the cut glass?

SLIM: (As if saying grace.)
Bless the bread, bless the meat,
Now by Joe, let's eat. Sit down, Shark.

NIGGER JOHN: I can move over. (He does so.)

SHARK: (Pointedly) I'll sit over here, if you don't mind.

SLIM: (Quietly and with antagonism.) Nobody minds, Shark. Nobody minds.

BUD: (Breaking a moment's tension) You figure we'll hit Calgary before sun down tomorrow, John?

NIGGER JOHN: Should do, Bud, failing a storm or the herd stampeding.

(Larry enters, bending all efforts to be a part of the Western scene.)

LARRY: Time for chuck eh? Yippee! (Lonesome shudders)

JIM: Shoot your coyote?

LARRY: No, I left him for Shorthorn. I'm not used to that gun. Say, do I hanker after that grub!

SLIM: (With a wink at LONESOME) You don't figure on eating-tonight?

LARRY: Why not?

SLIM: Well, this is your first day's hard riding. It ain't safe to eat. You better just have a cup of coffee, drink it slow.

LARRY: But I'm hungry.

SLIM: Have you ever seen a case of Range Riders' Cramp?

LARRY: No.

LONESOME: I've been doubled up in knots.

BUD: Yeah, give me snake-bite any time.

LONESOME: You sometimes have to operate.

LARRY: Operate?

SLIM: Without instruments. Just a butcher knife and a pair of pliers.

LARRY: Gee whillikins, I didn't know--

NIGGER JOHN: Go ahead and eat your dinner Larry. Don't pay them no mind.

SLIM: All right. But if anything happens, I won't take any responsibility.

BUD: Here's Shorthorn. I'll get another plate of beans.

LONESOME: Hi, Mr. Foreman.

SLIM: Mighty fisher, mighty hunter.

LARRY: Did you get the coyote?
(SHORTHORN has come down the rise. He takes the rifle over to the chuck wagon, placing it inside.)

SHORTHORN: Sure I got him. Got a hawk too.

LARRY: I shot a hawk just before I left home. It had a four foot wing spread.

SHORTHORN: That was Ontario, boy. We raise hawks in this country. Why I figure from tip to tip this critter would measure, oh about fifty feet.

LARRY: Fifty ---!

SLIM: Aw, Shorthorn, you went and killed a young one.

SHORTHORN: We'll get his pappy tommorow. (He takes a plate of beans from BUD and LONESOME pours him a cup of coffee) Thanks, boys. (He turns to SHARK and speaks quietly without emphasis.) Are you trying to make a killer out of that horse of yours, Shark?

SHARK: Just teaching him a few tricks. Any objections?

SHORTHORN: Yes, I have. Do your instructing when we're not driving cattle. I thought once today you were going to stampede the herd.

SHARK: Can't we speed this drive up a little?

SHORTHORN: We're getting there.

SHARK: I could make this drive in two days.

SHORTHORN: Not with my herd, you couldn't.

SHARK: Your herd? Are you rustling from Tilson on the side?

SHORTHORN: Yeah, I'm hiding them in a deep, dark cave. Going to develop a breed that can see in the dark.

LONESOME: Have some bacon, Shorthorn.

LARRY: Mr. Woolf----

SHORTHORN: Just call me Shorthorn, Larry.

LARRY: But you are Charlie Woolf, aren't you?

SHORTHORN: That's my name.

LARRY: My uncle says you can ride any horse that was ever born.

SHORTHORN: Sure, sure. I'm a rip-snortin', ring-tailed wonder, ain't I, John?

NIGGER JOHN: That's right, youngster. Why I've seen that man riding a horse that was pawing the white out of the moon every jump for a mile.

SHORTHORN: Wolf of the world, boys, that's me, the wolf of the world. Never met a horse could scare me yet. Mule did once though.

LARRY: A mule?

SHORTHORN: Big black mule. Down in Whiskey Gap. This mule started following me around. Every time I looked back there was that mule, just looking at me. I took to walking backwards so he wouldn't creep up behind me. You know he never did nothing, just followed me around watching me,all the time watching me. Big eyes!

NIGGER JOHN: That's bad, Shorthorn. What did you do?

SHORTHORN: Got so I couldn't stand it. I jumped a freight out of Milk River.

LARRY: What happened to the mule?

SHORTHORN: Old Mule broke his neck, trying to climb aboard.

SLIM: A mighty close shave.

SHORTHORN: I don't know. Figure now I oughtn't to have hopped that freight. Maybe that old mule wanted to tell me something. I might have been a better man if I'd listened to him.

SLIM: He probably was trying to tell you to quit cow punching and settle down to farming.

LONESOME: I don't need any old mule to tell me that. I'm quitting, soon as Tilson pays me off.

SLIM: I know, back to Iowa and raise hogs. Piggee - Pig - Pig - Pig. (He imitates a hog caller).

BUD: Way I figure it, the cattle man of the future has got to be part farmer whether he likes it or not.

SHORTHORN: Now Bud don't be so pessimistic. Only way to raise cattle is have good range and lots of it.

BUD: And good hay and lots of it too.

SHORTHORN: Oh, maybe have to raise a little hay all right. But these two-by-four farm sites are all right for pigs.

SHORTHORN: They're not ranching.

LONESOME: Pigs aren't so bad. I kind of like pigs.

SHORTHORN: Not me. Come spring, boys, you're going to see a new brand on the range. John and I think we can swing a place of our own. Bud may come in too.

SLIM: I thought that was in the air. You got a place lined up?

NIGGER JOHN: We're hoping. Back in the Porcupines, foothill country.

SLIM: Good range.

SHORTHORN: Best there is.

SLIM: And the foothills is about the only place left for cattlemen now.

SHORTHORN: Yeah, the barbed wire's creeping up on us, pushing us back.

NIGGER JOHN: Been the same everywhere, like a slow tide.

SHORTHORN: This big stampede they're holding--that's the writing on the wall, boys. When we start roping steers and riding broncs for show, instead of it being just a part of a day's work, then something's happened. Next thing they'll dress us up and show us off like they do Old Chief White Calf.

BUD: They've had stampedes in Texas for years. It's still cattle country.

SHORTHORN: Sure. They have them in New York too. White tie and tails.

BUD: And you weren't too proud to take the money there, Shorthorn. You took your chance.

SHORTHORN: I'm roping in this one too. I can use some cash. But I can't help being sorry for what's being lost on the way. I just don't like change, I guess.

BUD: You want me to ride next week, don't you?

SHORTHORN: What have I been coaching you for? I want you to stay on too, if you draw the rockiest outlaw in the string.

NIGGER JOHN: I don't like stampedes. I hate them.

SLIM: Gives a man a chance to show what he can do.

BUD: Sure it does, he's up against the best.

NIGGER JOHN: Maybe. I just can't see it, that's all, raking a horse from head to flank, making an outlaw out of him, wasting him, so's people can yell.

SHARK: Takes guts, that's all, guts and skill.

NIGGER JOHN: I know that, Shark.

SHARK: He's just getting old, boys. You get in there and have your fun.

SHORTHORN: (To SHARK) Have you ever seen John Ware break horses?

SHARK: No.

SHORTHORN: I don't think a man ever lived who could handle a raw, fighting, four year old better than Nigger John.

SHARK: (With a trace of a sneer) I suppose you talk to them?

NIGGER JOHN: Sometimes.

SHARK: You can have the gentle ones. I'll take them mean and ornery.

LONESOME: Not me. I'm not risking my neck. I'm going home. I'm not sold on this life.

SLIM: What! You don't like to say "Yippee"?

LONESOME: Promised Ma I'd come back in two years. I been away seven now. I've saved up all my wages since round-up, but I'd like a little more cash. Do you think I could win any money in the calf-roping, Shorthorn?

SHORTHORN: I'm afraid you're not very fast, Lonesome, for show stuff. You could try.

SHARK: This isn't a two-bit stampede. This is big time.

LONESOME: Well, don't matter. I'm going anyway. Why, I've got a girl in Iowa, did have, if she's not married.

SLIM: You ain't planning to get hitched, are you Lonesome?

LONESOME: What if I am? What's the matter with that?

SLIM: Oh, nothing, nothing at all, if you don't mind being shackled and tied, muzzled and browbeat. Not for me though. Too many women in the world. I don't aim to tie myself down to one.

BUD: : What's your girl's name, Lonesome?

LONESOME: Laura, just like in the song. You know that song? (He sings softly) Eyes like the morning star,
Cheeks like a rose,
Laura was a pretty girl,
God Almighty knows.

NIGGER JOHN: (Joining in) Weep all ye little rains,
Wail, winds, wail,
All along, along, along,
The Colorado Trail.

SHORTHORN: (After a brief pause) That's pretty, Lonesome. Maybe we'll all make a fortune at the Stampede and get married and settle down to raisin' a family. Sounds nice, don't it?

LARRY: You're going to enter the bronc-riding, aren't you, Shorthorn? Shark said you wouldn't.

SHORTHORN: Shark's right, Son. I ain't ridden for show for ten years. It's a young man's game.

LARRY: I bet you'd win anyway, just like you did in New York.

SHORTHORN: Thanks, Larry.

LARRY: I've been reading a story about a bronc-buster, just like you, only he was young of course. But he could rope and tie and shoot and ride like--well, just like you do, Shorthorn. He was wonderful!

SHORTHORN: That's me, all right. Bound to be. (To SLIM) You can touch me if you want.

LARRY: This story's true, honest. This fellow got in a fight in a poker dive down in Texas and he killed a man, after the man shot at him.

SLIM: Them was the days! You don't like somebody, you don't fuss around--you must go bang, bang and ride off into the sunset.

LARRY: This man's name was Weston.

LONESOME: I read about him too.

LARRY: They never did find him. He just disappeared.

SHORTHORN: (After a moment's pause) Reckon he was lucky, eh?

LARRY: I thought of you the whole time I was reading it. Why he had a bullet wound in his left arm, just like that scar you got. That's where the guy shot him.

SHARK: Hmmm -- that might be a bullet wound in your arm too, eh, Shorthorn?

SHORTHORN: Might.

NIGGER JOHN: Happens it ain't though. That's where he got gored by a bull. Thought you were a goner that day sure.

SHORTHORN: So did I.

NIGGER JOHN: His horse fell. I shot the bull just as--

BUD: You never told me about that Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: You never asked, Bud.

NIGGER JOHN: Before your time, Boy.

LARRY: Anyway I bet you could have shot as good as Weston. Why, I saw you hit that old tree stump at---

NIGGER JOHN: (Getting up) Reckon we better get moving. Dark's creepin' in.

SHORTHORN: (Rising) Yeah. Larry, you might herd with Lonesome until 2:00. Shark and Slim can take over then.

SHARK: You only need one night-herder for that bunch.

SHORTHORN: I'm putting on two.

SHARK: If you think I'm getting up to sing lullabies to them, you're riding way out of your saddle.

SHORTHORN: I'm giving the orders, Shark. Bud, you look after the horses.

BUD: Sure.

SHORTHORN: We ought to hit town before supper. We'll bed the herd down in Hull's pastures and load the next day. After that your time's your own. The boss wants us back at the ranch on the Monday after the Stampede.

LONESOME: Here's one little hang-over he won't see, no more. (Taking up his saddle, he goes off singing).

With my knees in the saddle and my seat in the sky
Gonna quit punching cows in the sweet bye and bye
Come a ti yi youpee, youpee yea, youpee yea,
Coma ti yi youpee, youpee yea
Fare you well old Trail Boss, I don't wish you any harm/
But I'm quittin' this business to go on the farm,
Coma ti yi youpee youpee yea, youpee yea,
Coma ti yi youpee, youpee yea.
(Calling back) You coming, Tenderfoot?(He goes out).

LARRY: Be right with you, Pard.

NIGGER JOHN: I'll take care of MIDNIGHT, Bud.

BUD: Good. (Bud and Nigger John go off).

SLIM: (To Larry) You ain't going to be nervous out there all alone are you?

LARRY: Why would I be nervous?

SLIM: (Off-handedly, as he twirls a rope). No reason. Nothing to worry about, except grizzlies.

LARRY: Grizzlies? You mean--bears?

SLIM: Yeah, I saw some tracks around. Reckon they're following us. Glad you're not nervous anyway.

LARRY: Gosh, I better get my gun.

SLIM: Gun's no use with a grizzly. They always sneak up from behind. Well, don't worry, I'll relieve you at two bells, --that is, if you're still around. (Smiling sweetly at LARRY, he goes out still twirling his rope.)

SHORTHORN: Shark, will you wait a minute? I want to see you. (to Larry) Here, kid, take this--you been trying to roll that one for an hour. (He hands LARRY a cigarette).

LARRY: Say, thanks. Shorthorn are there really---

SHORTHORN: No, Now you be quiet out there,hear. Keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut. Lonesome will tell you where to go.

LARRY: Yes, sir. (He goes out).
(Shark and Shorthorn are alone on the stage).

SHARK: Well, what's on your mind?

SHORTHORN: Shark, MacNab rode up with me today.

SHARK: Yeah?

SHORTHORN: He said you'd spoke for the job of foreman at the Bar O 7.

SHARK: That's right. He's looking for a foreman.

SHORTHORN: He asked me straight out whether I thought you could handle it.

SHARK: Well, I can.

SHORTHORN: (Finding it difficult to say) I didn't think so, Shark. I hated to do it but I told MacNab I couldn't honestly recommend you.

SHARK: (Blazing) Double cross eh?

SHORTHORN: No. I told MacNab you was one of the best riders I ever saw, that you'd work like two men at anything exciting. But you dodge out on the chores every time.

SHARK: He wants a foreman, not a chore boy.

SHORTHORN: MacNab's got a big outfit. He wants someone he can depend on day in, day out. Somebody that can take orders as well as give them. You can't. I'm sorry. I wish I could have said more for you.

SHARK: The hell you do. You been jealous of me ever since I signed on.

SHORTHORN: No. You've been looking for trouble though.

SHARK: Who's MacNab hiring?

SHORTHORN: John Ware--that is, if John and I can't swing our own place.

SHARK: That nigger.

SHORTHORN: Nigger John, Shark.

SHARK: Yeah, Nigger John.

SHORTHORN: That's all,Shark.

SHARK: You think so? Nobody ever double-crossed me and got away with it, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: I can see how you feel. But when a man asks me what I think, he gets just that.

SHARK: The rest of these boot-lickers may think you're God Almighty,Shorthorn. Not me. I'm not taking this lying down.

SHORTHORN: We know where we stand anyway.

(LARRY comes bustling in,filled with importance)

LARRY: Forgot my lariat. You know when I was a kid in Toronto I used to imagine myself riding out in the night with my lariat over my saddle horn. And here I am.

SHARK: Come on, kid. I'll teach you a few tricks. I'll take Midnight and give you Cinders.

LARRY: You mean it? I've been wanting some action all day.

SHORTHORN: You stay off Cinders, Larry.

LARRY: But I'd like to--

SHORTHORN: You ride Daisy in this outfit till you can buy a horse of your own. You heard me. Now go on and find Lonesome.
(Larry goes out. Shorthorn turns to Shark).

What are you trying to do, break his neck?

SHARK: Be too bad if the boss's nephew got tossed wouldn't it? He might be looking for a new foreman too.

SHORTHORN: Another thing, you leave Midnight alone, Shark. He's Nigger John's horse.

SHARK: He's Tilson's horse.

SHORTHORN: You know nobody but John can ride him. Stay away from him. I'm not having you or anybody else make an outlaw of him.

SHARK: So! Tilson didn't tell you. Midnight will be anybody's horse next week, anybody at all that wants to ride him.

SHORTHORN: What do you mean?

SHARK: Tilson entered Midnight in the bronc-riding contest.

NIGGER JOHN: (Coming in in time to hear the last) That ain't true.

SHARK: Don't you call me a liar, black boy. Look at this. (He hands SHORTHORN a paper.)

SHORTHORN: (Slowly) That's what it says, John. (He hands the paper to NIGGER JOHN).

NIGGER JOHN: Tilson's Midnight--bronc-riding contest, Event No.3. He can't do it, Shorthorn. Tilson can't enter Midnight.

SHARK: He owns him doesn't he? I hope I draw the black devil. I'll rip him wide open.

NIGGER JOHN: You won't ever ride Midnight, Shark. Nobody is ever going to stay on Midnight's back but me.

SHARK: I thought you were the fellow who knew how to break horses?

NIGGER JOHN: I never broke Midnight, Shark. I spent seven hours getting throwed off his back, then he just decided he'd let me ride him, before I killed myself trying. That's the way it was. He likes me now and he trusts me, but he don't feel that way about anybody else. I don't know why. You won't ever ride Midnight, Shark.

SHARK: I'll be on there trying.

BUD: (Entering) The horses are playful as colts tonight.

SHARK: (Starting out) How'd you like to ride Midnight, Bud?

BUD: Midnight's John's horse. Anyway I'm saving my bones for the Stampede. Going to break them in public.

SHARK: Tilson's entered Midnight.

BUD: No?

SHORTHORN: Seems that way, Bud.

SHARK: (As he leaves.) You better get in there, boy. We'll see how much the great Shorthorn's taught you. (Shark goes off)

SHORTHORN Maybe we can talk Tilson out of it, John.

NIGGER JOHN: You know Tilson, once he's made up his mind. I tried to buy Midnight from him but he won't sell. And yet I can't help feeling that Midnight's my horse.

BUD: But people ought to have the chance to see him, John. There's not a bronc like him in the province.

NIGGER JOHN: If Midnight goes into the chutes, I won't be going back to the ranch. I collect my pay.

SHORTHORN: You won't be going back to the ranch anyway, John. You're going to have to make a choice--coming in with me, like we planned, or going in as Foreman of the Bar O 7.

NIGGER JOHN: MacNab's outfit?

SHORTHORN: That's right. It's a big deal.

BUD: Boy, that's the best job in the South.

SHORTHORN: That's why he wants the best man in the South as foreman, Bud.

NIGGER JOHN: Reckon I can pass that up, Shorthorn--unless our deal for our own place falls through.

SHORTHORN: You better think about it, John.

NIGGER JOHN: I don't need to think about it.

SHORTHORN: I hoped you'd feel that way. (A little pause) You're grieving over Midnight, ain't you, John?

NIGGER JOHN: Yeah, I reckon I am. He's got a proud spirit, proud and strong. And they'll hurt him, try to break him down--

SHORTHORN: I'll do my best with Tilson. (Off stage LARRY'S voice is heard in an excited cry . "Whoa, Daisy, hold still now, hold still. Whoa--Please Whoa, Daisy, please whoa.") (SHORTHORN turns) I guess I better get out there and make sure the youngster's facing the right end of the horse. (He goes out.)

BUD: (Getting some tobacco out of his saddle bag) Do you think I have a chance in the bronc riding, John.

NIGGER JOHN: A good chance, Bud.

BUD: Shorthorn says I'm inclined to pull the horse a little. But I stayed on Rocket 13 seconds over at the Bar last Sunday.

NIGGER JOHN: You'll be all right. You'll be as good as Shorthorn was before you're through, Bud, if you want to be. Maybe not this year--but some time.

BUD: Honest?

NIGGER JOHN: I think so.

BUD: I suppose a big stampede like this is old stuff to you.

NIGGER JOHN: No. I've never been to many. I like the range better A city can be a lonely place for a cow-hand, unless he's drunk.

BUD: I won't be lonely. I've got a girl to take to the dances.

NIGGER JOHN: Thought you liked a different one every night?

BUD: Not any more. This gal beats the rest of them a mile. I just met her a month ago. She's pretty and little and--oh, I don't know, I reckon Celia is just a real nice girl.

NIGGER JOHN: That's fine, Bud. (Looking at the sky) Let's see, next week we're due for a full moon too. A real, courtin' moon.

BUD: That's right, just what I ordered. Well, I better give Trigger a rub-down. (He goes off).
(NIGGER JOHN sits quietly a moment. In the distance LONESOME can be heard singing "We're alone, Doney Gal." SHORTHORN comes in).

SHORTHORN: I see old Chief White Calf heading north, with all his family and fourteen dogs. Like you said about Midnight, John, that Indian's got a proud spirit, proud as they make them. And he's pushed off on the sidelines too. Wonder if that's progress?

NIGGER JOHN: I don't know. Way I see it, just a few people in each generation go ahead, Shorthorn. Most of us are still runnin' behind with the pack.
(There is a brief pause)

SHORTHORN: Thanks for speaking up tonight, John.

NIGGER JOHN: Forget it.

SHORTHORN: Have you always known?

NIGGER JOHN: No, I never knew, until tonight. I've wondered.

SHORTHORN: Why? Do I look like a killer?

NIGGER JOHN: No. But until the last couple of years you were always waiting for something. Waiting and watchful.

SHORTHORN: Yeah. Twenty-two years of waiting. Nearly half my life-time.

NIGGER JOHN: You've seemed easier in your mind this last while.

SHORTHORN: I got to thinking I was safe John. Then this kid comes up with a story he's read in a two-bit magazine. Do you think the others----?

NIGGER JOHN: Never entered their heads. They ain't known you like I do.

SHORTHORN: Seems like it happened to somebody else now, not me at all. I've tried to be square the best I know. I didn't want to kill him, John. He was looking for trouble.

NIGGER JOHN: Forget about it.

SHORTHORN: (Looking at the scar on his arm) You do what you see to do at the time, that's all anybody can do.

NIGGER JOHN: Let it go, boy. It's way back there behind you where it don't matter no more. And you've paid for it. You're safe now. You hear me.

SHORTHORN: Yeah. You're right, I got to forget it, let it go. The only thing, I want to ask a girl to marry me, John.

NIGGER JOHN: You can still ask her.

SHORTHORN: I don't know. I wouldn't want her to see trouble. She's never had much from life but hard work. She's just a slip of a thing too.

NIGGER JOHN: You known her long?

SHORTHORN: Three months maybe. She works at Ma Raybourne's boarding house where we'll stay. Seems like I've wanted to know her, somebody like her, all my life.

NIGGER JOHN: Be nice having a woman partner for the ranch, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: If I'm lucky. What's Lonesome's song? "Eyes like the morning star, cheek like a rose"--sounds just like Celia.

NIGGER JOHN: Celia!

SHORTHORN: Celia Brant. You'll like her, John.

NIGGER JOHN: You better ask her, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: Yeah, if we get the ranch I'll get my courage up and ask her. Anyway if she says 'no' she'll say it nice. She wouldn't ever laugh at a man, I know that.
(There is a silence.. LONESOME'S voice comes very close off-stage. He is singing "Doney Gal").
Listen, John. I reckon that's my favorite song. By God, we'll keep it this way. Up there in the Porcupine we'll be free to go on the way we have been, raising cattle, herding them under our own brand, living the only way I ever want to live, close to the sky and the stars knowing the wind and the way the herd beds down and the sound of an old bull bellowing his pain and his challenge out in the night. I'm just and old rawhide, John and so are you. We can't change. We can't ever change.

NIGGER JOHN: No, we won't change. The tide'll keep coming though..
(Off-stage there is a shout and muffled profanity and sounds of confusion.)

SHORTHORN: What's happened now?

NIGGER JOHN: (On his feet) Sounds like Midnight. I'll take a look.

BUD: (Entering quickly) Midnight just tossed Shark in two jumps.

SHORTHORN: Shark's a goddamn fool. Was he hurt?

BUD: No. Shaken up. Midnight's off down the coulee like greased lightning.

NIGGER JOHN: I'll go after him.

SHORTHORN: Take my horse John. (Nigger John goes out) Bud, you ride out and see if the herd's nervous, be ready to give Lonesome a hand. And tell Shark I want to see him.

BUD: Right. (He goes off)

JIM: (Coming out of the chuck wagon) What's all the excitement?

SHORTHORN: Somebody got tossed.

JIM: Everybody so steamed up about this Stampede, it's a wonder they don't all break their necks. Wish they would, maybe I could get some sleep. (He goes off).

(Shorthorn rolls a cigarette and turns as SHARK enters).

SHORTHORN: Two jumps eh,

SHARK: I suppose you could do better?

SHORTHORN: I don't know. I've never tried to ride Midnight. I think I could last 10 seconds though.

SHARK: No, you're through. You're a has-been, Shorthorn. But I'll ride him yet, you see.

SHORTHORN: Maybe. (A pause) You're fired, Shark.

SHARK: Suits me. You're firing your best rider, though.

SHORTHORN: I know that. You can collect your pay from Tilson in town.

SHARK: Tilson may have something to say.

SHORTHORN: He may. I've said mine. Get your things together and get out first thing in the morning.

SHARK: I'll go tonight, thanks.

SHORTHORN: That's up to you. (He turns his back on SHARK and walks up the rise, speaking without turning.) You better ask Jim for anything you'll need.

SHARK: I'll get along all right. Keep your mind easy. I wouldn't want you to worry about me----Charlie Weston. (His voice cracks in the stillness).

(SHORTHORN stops, stands for a moment, his back to SHARK, his hand involuntarily reaching for his gun. SHARK is ready to draw. Then SHORTHORN relaxes and turns slowly).

SHARK: That's all I wanted to know.

SHORTHORN: The name's Woolf, Charlie Woolf. (Quietly). Don't let me keep you, Shark. You've got a long ride ahead. (The two men look at one another for a moment. Finally SHARK takes up his saddle and walks off. Off-stage LONESOME'S voice rises in The Night Herd Song. SHORTHORN turns and walks up the rise and off stage.

CURTAIN

STAMPEDE

ACT II

SCENE: The living room of Ma Raybourne's boarding house.

TIME: September, 1912. Evening, one week later than Act I.

SETTING: MA RAYBOURNE'S living room is a mixture of Victorian furniture and Western odds and ends. On the walls are some Indian bead work, pictures of range men and horses, a mounted Moose head and some large horns which serve as a hat rack.

LONESOME and PETE are sitting at the table with a bottle between them. They have been imbibing and singing for some time.

LONESOME: (Chalking up on a small slate). Seventy-seven. That makes seventy-seven songs I've sung.

PETE: I've sung seventy-five.

LONESOME: You're slowing up, though. You might as well kiss your hundred bucks goodbye.

PETE: Hah! I'm not even started yet.

LONESOME: Here's one you don't know. (He begins to strum).

PETE: My turn!

LONESOME: Don't argue. I can't stand argument;--argument and cattle, I'm through with them.

PETE: If you don't like arguing you shouldn't get married.

LONESOME: My wife starts to argue, you know what I'll do, I'll start to sing loud, loud as I can, like this:

(Singing) Did you ever hear tell of sweet Betsy from Pike/
Who crossed the wide prairie with her lover Ike,/
With two yolk of cattle and one spotted hog,
A tall Shanghai rooster and an old yaller dog./

(He chalks up seventy-eight, as he sings.)

PETE: (Belligerently.) You can't count that one. It's my turn.

LONESOME: (Placing his hands over his ears, continues to sing very loudly).
Sing too-ral-li-oo-ral-li-oo-rall-li-ay.
They swam the wide rivers and crossed the tall peaks
And camped on the prairies for weeks upon weeks.

PETE: (Beginning to sing louder than LONESOME)
Great Granddad when the land was young
Barred the door with a wagon tongue.

LONESOME: (Singing above him)
Starvation and cholera and hard work and slaughter
They reached old Macleod spite of hell and high water.

PETE: Now I have to start over. You got me off the tune. (Singing)
Great Granddad when the land was young
Barred the door with a wagon tongue
For the times was rough and the red skins mocked
And he said his prayers with his shot gun cocked.

LONESOME: (Joining in for the next verse.)
Twenty-one children came to bless
The old man's home in the wilderness.
But Great Granddad didn't lose heart,
The boys hunted rabbits and they ketched right smart.

PETE: (Chalking up.) Makes me seventy-six. This is better than their old stampede. Trouble with stampedes is people, everywhere you look there's people.

LONESOME: Yeah, people and calves. Too many mean old calves around there. I know a song we haven't sung yet. (He begins on Strawberry Roan and after a moment PETE harmonizes).
(Ma Raybourne opens the outside door and stands listening for a moment. She is a big, sharp-tongued woman with red hair and a soft heart for cattlemen. She has been to the Stampede and is wearing a once-fashionable riding skirt, a man's shirt and an old felt hat.)

MA: What in blazes is going on here? Sounds like a den of coyotes.

LONESOME: We're having a singing contest, Ma. We ain't doing nothing wrong.

MA: What's in that bottle?

LONESOME: Just a little old root beer.

MA: (Sniffing) Yeah, Johnny Walker's brand. You know I don't allow spirits in my parlour. You put that bottle away.

LONESOME: (Meekly, looking at bottle) I reckon we've already put it away, Ma.

MA: (To PETE) Who are you?

LONESOME: This is Pete McCartney of the Bar O 7. My friend, my very good friend.

MA: (Thawing) Howdy, Pete. You boys ought to be out at the chutes.

PETE: Yes, Ma'am.

LONESOME: We got discouraged.

MA: Lonesome, I've seen a lot of calf-roping in my time, but before God, I never saw any worse roping than what you done today. Looked once there as if the calf was going to tie you up.

LONESOME: That wasn't a nice calf, Ma. He kicked me in my stomach and then he butted me, from behind. There I was, in pain, and what did everybody do, laugh like a bunch of loons.

PETE: Did we miss much this afternoon?

MA: Plenty. Midnight threw Shark in four jumps, just like he piled every other rider this week.

LONESOME: Shark was so sure he could ride Midnight.

PETE: Wish I owned that horse.

LONESOME: How did Bud do?

MA: Bud got thrown hard. Cyclone jack-knifed on him. He didn't look good when he got up, but he said he was all right.

LONESOME: Too bad, Bud had top score.

MA: He's still high for the week, with Shark running pretty close. The steer roping was coming up when I left. I bet twenty dollars on Shorthorn. He's the only cowboy I ever saw that could out-rope my old man.

LONESOME: What about me, Ma?

MA: You! Could do better myself. Oh, Ceeley! (She calls toward kitchen.)

CELIA: (From the kitchen). I'm here, Ma.

MA: Bring me my slippers, will you? (To LONESOME and PETE) My feet hurt. Ed bought me these boots twenty years ago. They never did fit but I wore them so I wouldn't hurt his feelings. Ed was a very sensitive man.

CELIA: (Coming in with the slippers. She is a pretty girl of about nineteen with a shy, friendly manner.) Hello, Lonesome, Pete. Here you are, Ma Raybourne.

MA: Thanks, Ceeley. Did you get that side of bacon?

CELIA: I did, Ma.

MA: You missed a good day. Be your turn tomorrow. Anybody back yet?

CELIA: Just Lonesome. How did Bud do?

MA: He's still top score but Cyclone--
(SHORTHORN and NIGGER JOHN come in from outside.)

SHORTHORN: Evening, folks.

MA: How did you do, Shorthorn?

SHORTHORN: Not bad, did I John?

NIGGER JOHN: He won the money, Mrs. Raybourne.

SHORTHORN: Even got a present for you, Ceeley. (He gives her a pair of silver spurs).

CELIA: For me! Oh, they're beautiful.

SHORTHORN: Roped and tied in 17 seconds. How's that, Ma?

MA: My old man did it in 15 once.

SHORTHORN: I'd have been faster too if you'd been there watching, Ma.

MA: My feet were killing me, or I'd have stayed. Well you won me twenty dollars, boy.

SHORTHORN: Is Bud here?

MA: No.

SHORTHORN: I talked to him right after he was thrown.

CELIA: Thrown?

SHORTHORN: Cyclone tossed him just under the gong. He's a riding fool, though.

CELIA: Was he hurt?

SHORTHORN: I thought so at first, but he said he was just shaken up.

NIGGER JOHN: He came down awful hard.

LONESOME: Don't anybody rub out that score. Pete and I aim to continue.

SHORTHORN: Continue what?

LONESOME: Our singing contest. We got tired of the Stampede.

SHORTHORN: I warned you, Lonesome.

LONESOME: I knowed better myself,=but I was in the grip of greed. You know Shorthorn, I don't think that was a calf at all I was roping. I think that was old Satan dressed up in a calf's hide. Calf and I get down there, nose to nose and I see blue flames spitting out of his eyes, and his breath smells of sulphur. Right then I knew I'd made a mistake. Who am I to tie up old Satan? I ain't no reformer.

MA: You couldn't tie a sick sheep, cowboy.
(SLIM enters)

SLIM: Shorthorn, you were greased lightning this afternoon. We're mighty proud of him, aren't we, Ceeley?

CELIA: He knows we are.

SHORTHORN: Wolf of the world, boys, that's me, the wolf of the world! Shall we tell them, John?

NIGGER JOHN: (Smiling) Yeah, tell them.

SHORTHORN: Take a look at us, folks. You see before you the holders of the Diamond J. Cattle Ranch, three hundred acres of deed land and a thousand acres under lease.

NIGGER JOHN: Mountain water and grass so high you got to wear stilts to find your way home.

SLIM: So, you swung it, boys! Congratulations!

MA: Do you mean it, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: There it is, all down in writing. (He puts the lease on the table.) Why, we may even have a couple of head of cattle, Ma.

CELIA: (Looking at the paper) Charlie Woolf and John Ware. Oh, that's wonderful, Shorthorn.

SLIM: Mr. Woolf, sir.

SHORTHORN: (Entering into the game.) Hurry it up, boys, hurry it up. Want them mavericks branded before sunset.

NIGGER JOHN: Don't push them, Shorthorn. Why we got so many cattle it'll take us all summer just to cut the babie out from their ma's.

SHORTHORN: I'm leaving it in your hands, Partner. Going to hitch my cats and take a run out to our near range. Be back in two months.

LONESOME: By golly, if I wasn't going home I'd come and work for you.

NIGGER JOHN: There'll always be a place for you, Lonesome.

(LARRY comes in from the Stampede. He is dressed from head to toe in everything the story-book cowboy might wear.)

LARRY: Howdy, everybody. (He starts upstairs importantly.)

SLIM: Boy, oh, boy, would you look at that? That man's all dressed up like a cowboy. (He lassoos LARRY and pulls him over.) Come on over, Ranger, and let us admire you.

LARRY: I'm in a hurry.

LONESOME: Now where do you reckon he got an' outfit like that? (He takes off LARRY'S hat and puts it on.)Yippee!

SLIM: Would you look at these gloves?(Takes the gloves off)

PETE: Mighty fancy neck-piece here. (Off it comes)

SLIM: Boots. (With one movement SLIM and PETE tip LARRY into a chair and remove the boots). Hand-tooled genuine cowhide, Ma. I always hankered for a pair of real cowboy boots.

LARRY: Whoa, you guys, whoa!

LONESOME: I'd sure admire to have a belt like that.

SLIM: Shootin' irons, eh? (Off comes the belt.)

LARRY: Hey, what you fellows going to do?Take off all my clothes?

SLIM: (Primly) Mind your tongue, boy, there's ladies present. You reckon that shirt's real silk, Ma? (He pulls out the shirt-tail).

MA: Now, Slim, you give that boy back his clothes.

SLIM: But I always wanted a cowboy suit, Ma. You don't mind borrowing me this stuff, do you, Larry? (Turning from the door.) Look at that now, he's trying to get away with my new rope. Why, you can't trust anybody any more. (He recovers the rope swiftly). See you all later.

(SLIM, LONESOME and PETE fade swiftly out the front door, taking LARRY'S gear, and leaving him dishevelled and upset.)

LARRY: Now look at me! My underwear showing! I thought you were my friend, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: They won't take them far, Larry.

LARRY: (At the window). They're putting them up on those trees all down the boulevard.

SHORTHORN: Chase them down, boy, chase them down.

LARRY: (As he goes, valiantly) I hope I don't have to beat up on anybody. (He goes out.)

MA: John,have you and Shorthorn had anything to eat?

NIGGER JOHN: Sure, Mrs. Raybourne. We had a little lunch up at the Stampede.

MA: Lunch! Sandwich! I'll fix you a real supper.

SHORTHORN: You're spoiling us, Ma.

MA: I ain't very beautiful and I ain't very smart. Only way I can get a rancher to smile at me any more is to set a good table. (She starts out, then turns.) Shorthorn, there was a man here to see you today,--- Charlie, Charlie Russell.

SHORTHORN: I saw him, Ma. He's coming up to paint some pictures of the spring round-up.

NIGGER JOHN: Never was a man could draw a range pony like Charlie.

SHORTHORN: Or a herd of stampeding cattle.

NIGGER JOHN: Or a bronc pawing at the stars.

MA: He didn't look like a painter. He looked like a cattle man.

NIGGER JOHN: He is, Mrs. Raybourne. Charlie's a cattle man right down to the ground. You want me to fix your fire?

MA: Thanks, John. (They go into the kitchen).

SHORTHORN: Yes, sir, most everything I ever saw or hated or loved I can find again in one of Charlie Russell's pictures-- except you, Ceeley.

CELIA: Why, Shorthorn--

SHORTHORN: And you're there in a way too, the way the wind and that coolness that comes creeping over the grass at sundown is there. You can't see them, but you feel them. Why that coolness--it's like drinking the wine of God, Ceeley.

CELIA: That's beautiful, Shorthorn. Tell me some more.

SHORTHORN: Well, you're riding along; out in front the old Rockies are there,watching things come and go, summer and winter, storm and sun. You hear a river. You listen sometimes it sounds loud and then it dies away. You

SHORTHORN: (continued) get to thinking that if you listen long enough maybe that river could tell you some of the answers. You see an old hawk wheeling high, high-- half way between you and the stars.

CELIA: Go on.

SHORTHORN: Coyote howls somewhere. It's a lost sort of sound, yeah, that's it, lost. Maybe your horse shies at a porcupine jogging along like a happy old man. Pretty soon it all goes together. You catch yourself thinking that no matter how blind you're riding, living's a good thing, Ceeley, a real, good thing.

CELIA: Sometimes you seem like the wisest man in the world to me, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: No. What I've seen, I've noticed, that's all. A wise man knows something more than he's seen, like Nigger John.

CELIA: Will living be like that for me, like you said, not jangled or tight or little,-- a real, good thing?

SHORTHORN: I want it to be, Ceeley.

CELIA: Sometimes I feel like something wonderful was going to happen, as if the whole world was trembling with it, but I don't know what it is or what I want.

SHORTHORN: You will know, Ceeley.

CELIA: When you come, Shorthorn, you talk so fine. It's like you pushed the walls back for me, so I can see beyond just working and eating and washing dishes. Ever since I've known you things have looked different to me, as if there was magic, little pools of magic that settled down on people now and then.

SHORTHORN: One settled round you right now, Ceeley.

CELIA: And there's times when everything seems so beautiful and sad, all the moments going by and we can't hold on to them----

SHORTHORN: I know.

CELIA: (Jumping down from the table) Imagine us talking like this! So serious. I must put these in my room. (She takes up the spurs). I'll keep them always, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: Ceeley, wait-- (Celia turns. Larry comes in very indignant)

LARRY: Do you know what they did? They sold my hat to that boot-black down the street. I had to pay him two dollars to get it back.

SHORTHORN: Looks like you're having trouble getting to that dance, Larry.

LARRY: (Going upstairs). I was planning on getting my picture taken too.

(BUD comes in from outside. He looks tired and shaky).

BUD: Hello.

CELIA: How do you feel, Bud?

SHORTHORN: I was proud of you today, boy.

BUD: I didn't ride him.

SHORTHORN: You made a good try, and you're still high man.

BUD: Yeah, thanks to Midnight. Shark's right behind me.

CELIA: You weren't hurt, Bud?

BUD: Jarred me up a little.

SHORTHORN: You look shaky.

BUD: Tired. I've drawn Midnight for tomorrow.

SHORTHORN: I think you may ride him, Bud. You've got to, its the last day.

BUD: Can't help hoping I will, but Shark didn't--or anybody else so far.

SHORTHORN: You're better than Shark, boy. You could be a great rider -- if you want to.

BUD: Want to!

SHORTHORN: It'd mean following the rodeos from here to Mexico, son.

BUD: What's wrong with that?

SHORTHORN: Nothing, only -- John and I made a deal for our ranch today. We hoped you'd sign on as top-rider.

BUD: Why, thanks, Shorthorn -- the Diamond J, eh? That's fine! (He is looking at the lease.) I could still contest the bronc-riding.

SHORTHORN: Maybe.

BUD: When do you take over?

SHORTHORN: Two months.

BUD: I'll sure think about it, Shorthorn. But this stampede game's getting in my blood. I could make a lot of money at it, in the next five years, if I'm lucky.

SHORTHORN: We figured you might buy in to the ranch before long. John and I aren't as young as we once were---

BUD: Sounds all right, doesn't it, Ceeley?

CELIA: Don't turn it down, Bud. (Ma appears in the doorway).

MA: Come on, Shorthorn. Hello, bronc-buster. Come and eat. You look like you need a good meal.

BUD: I ate down town, Ma. Thanks, anyway.

MA: Hmmm! Insulting me in my own home.

BUD: Now, Ma---

MA: No excuses. Hurry up, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: I'm right on the spot. (They go into the kitchen).

CELIA: Maybe you're too tired to go to the dance, Bud.

BUD: I'll feel all right after I rest awhile.

CELIA: I'm sorry you were thrown.

BUD: It happened awful fast. I thought I was better than I am, I guess.

CELIA: Do you have to ride tomorrow?

BUD: I want to ride. There's five hundred dollars in it.

CELIA: But they say nobody can ride Midnight, but Nigger John.

BUD: I can try.

CELIA: What if you get hurt?

BUD: You have to take your chances in this game.

CELIA: I wish you didn't have to ride again. There was a man killed last year. What does the money matter?

BUD: It could matter a lot to me, to us, Ceeley.

CELIA: To us?

BUD: That's what I said, Ceeley.

CELIA: Oh, Bud! (She moves toward him.)

BUD: I didn't mean to tell you yet, but you know now. That's how I feel.

CELIA: That's how I feel too, Bud.

BUD: Ceeley! (He kisses her). I'll take good care of you. I'll give you everything I can, the moon with a ring around it, if you want it.

CELIA: I feel like I've got the moon with a ring around it,Bud.

BUD: I meant to wait to ask you, until the Stampede was over. Then, if I was still in one piece, we were going out to some ritzy place and I was going to get you some red roses and--

CELIA: I'm glad I know now.

BUD: So am I. You're awfully pretty, did you know? Prettiest thing on God's green earth.

CELIA: I can cook too. Ask Ma.

BUD: Good thing. Now all I have to do is teach you to ride and shoot rabbits and I won't ever have to work at all.

CELIA: And you won't follow the rodeos, will you, Bud? You'll stay and go in on the ranch--

BUD: Bossing me round already eh?

CELIA: Oh, Bud, isn't everything---

BUD: It sure is. (He starts to kiss her again when the sound of singing and several loud Yippees are heard outside.) They would come busting in.
(LONESOME and PETE enter singing. When they get inside BUD and CELIA have moved apart.)

LONESOME and PETE: (Singing)
Rye whiskey, Rye whiskey, rye whiskey, I cry
If I don't have rye whiskey, I surely will die.

Oh baby, oh baby, I've told you before,
Do make me a pallet, I'll lie on the floor.

PETE: (Chalking up). Ninety-two.

LONESOME: (Singing as he waves to CELIA and BUD and chalks up 97).
I'm a poor lonesome cowboy, I'm a poor lonesome cowboy,
I'm a poor lonesome cowboy,
And a long ways from home.

Home, Ceeley, that's where I'm going, home. Going home tomorrow as soon as Bud gets bucked off Midnight.

PETE: We don't have no home. We're just poor lonesome cowboys.

LONESOME: I have so got a home. Right in the plumb centre of Iowa, I got a little home.

CELIA: Are you boys going to the dance?

PETE: No, we're waiting for Slim. We've got a big game on at the Alberta.

LONESOME: We came home to sandpaper our fingers, Ceeley, so's nobody will cheat us.

BUD: You better leave your roll at home, Lonesome.

LONESOME: Not me. I'm covered with horseshoes. I won't get anything under a straight flush, you see.
(LONESOME and PETE go upstairs. SHARK comes in.)

SHARK: Evening, Bud. I was looking for you.

BUD: What do you want with me, Shark?

SHARK: You don't feel too good, do you?

BUD: Never better.

SHARK: You're crazy, trying to ride tomorrow. That horse is a killer.

BUD: He tossed you clean.

SHARK: I had a loose stirrup.

BUD: Sure.

SHARK: How about giving me another chance at him tomorrow?

BUD: I've drawn Midnight and I go in.

SHARK: Look, you broke a rib today and I know it.

BUD: How do you know?

SHARK: I talked to the doctor that fixed you up. He told you not to ride again didn't he?

BUD: It's none of your business, Shark.

SHARK: I'm making it my business. If you withdraw in my favor I get a chance at the money.

BUD: I'm not withdrawing.

SHARK: I'll make it worth your while.

BUD: Get out, Shark.

CELIA: Bud, is it true, did you break a rib?

BUD: I'm all strapped up, Ceeley. I feel fine. You stay out of this.

SHARK: Hmmm? So this is your prize package, is it, Bud? No wonder you want to win the money.

BUD: I said get out, Shark. (He makes a move toward SHARK. SHARK give him a swift punch in his ribs and BUD pulls back with the pain.)

SHARK: That hurt didn't it? How are you going to feel after the pounding that black will give you?
(SHORTHORN and NIGGER JOHN come in).

SHORTHORN: What's going on?

SHARK: Your wonder boy isn't feeling so good.

CELIA: Bud broke a rib this afternoon. The doctor told him not to ride again.

SHORTHORN: That right, Bud?

BUD: Leave me alone. I'm riding.

CELIA: Please, Bud, withdraw. You might be killed!

SHORTHORN: Why didn't you tell us you were hurt, boy?

BUD: So you wouldn't interfere.

CELIA: Why wouldn't we interfere? Shark could go in.

SHARK: If I ride him, I'll split with you. Think it over. I want to see Lonesome, I'll be back. (He starts upstairs.)

BUD: There's no use coming back. I won't withdraw.

SHARK: Suicide artist eh? (He goes).

CELIA: You could take the honors next year, Bud.

BUD: I've ga chance to take them this year, Ceeley. I'm on a rocket and I can't quit now. Like I said, five hundred bucks could mean everything to us.

CELIA: I don't care about the money, I just care about you. Please withdraw, Bud, for me.

BUD: Look, Ceeley, you can't make me over. If you're not willing to let me take my chances, tomorrow, or any other time, why we better just call it a day.
(SHORTHORN has been watching the two closely).

CELIA: (Hurt, she turns away). I wasn't trying to make you over, Bud. I just don't want you to be killed, that's all. I won't say any more. (She goes into the kitchen).

BUD: (Moving toward her.) Ceeley---(But she is gone.)

SHORTHORN: (After watching CELIA go out, he turns to BUD). So that's how it is, Bud, you and Ceeley---?

BUD: Yes. I've got her to think about now. I want to give her nice things.

SHORTHORN: I see. (He is shaken by his realization that he has no chance with CELIA but quickly recovers himself.) You won't do it, by getting yourself a nice coffin tomorrow.

BUD: You said I had a chance tomorrow.

SHORTHORN: I didn't know you cracked up. You haven't a chance to stay on Midnight with a broken rib. If you're thrown right, you could puncture a lung. I've seen it happen.

BUD: I'll risk it.

SHORTHORN: I've taught you everything I know.

BUD: I know what you've done for me.

SHORTHORN: When I say you're in no shape to ride, I know what I'm talking about. There'll be a lot of money bet on you tomorrow and you're hiding the fact that you cracked up. It ain't fair.

BUD: I'm strapped up tight. None of you even suspected.

SHORTHORN: Shark might stay on him tomorrow. You could give him the chance.

BUD: Shark had his chance at Midnight today. I won't give him mine. You saw how he dug in. I ride better than that and you know it.

SHORTHORN: Will you withdraw in my favour, Bud?

BUD: Yours? Why, you're too old. You said so yourself.

SHORTHORN: I've changed my mind.

BUD: I won't do it.

SHORTHORN: The doctor at the grounds never saw you today, did he?

BUD: What do you think?

SHORTHORN: If you had reported a busted rib, you'd be disqualified.

BUD: That's why I didn't report it.

SHORTHORN: I can still report it.

BUD: You wouldn't! Why, even Shark isn't that yellow.

SHORTHORN: I shouldn't have to.

BUD: All right, you don't have to go tale-telling to the doctor. I'll withdraw, in your favour, because you asked me to.

SHORTHORN: Good.

BUD: Because of what you've done for me. But that ought to about even things up, Shorthorn. We'll be quits from then on. You can find somebody else for your ranch--

SHORTHORN: If that's the way you want it, Bud.

BUD: That's the way.

SHORTHORN: Come on, let's go over and fix it up then.
(SHARK comes downstairs.)

SHARK: Did you make up your mind, cowboy?

SHORTHORN: Bud's withdrawing.

SHARK: Good.

SHORTHORN: I'm going in in his place.

SHARK: You! (To Bud) Is that right?

BUD: That's what he said. That black bounced you around enough today, Shark, let him work on Shorthorn tomorrow.

SHARK: I can bust you faster than that bronc can, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: Go ahead, Shark.

SHARK: I go in, or I tell what I know.

SHORTHORN: You don't know anything, Shark. Come on, Bud.

SHARK: No? I know you rode out of Dallas with Whitey McKinnon in July 1889. You were nursing a bullet wound in your left arm. Whitey was--

NIGGER JOHN: Shorthorn was in Montana in 1889.

SHARK: Not in July. And Mick Dryden was shot in July.

NIGGER JOHN: You're barking up the wrong tree, Shark. You better go sleep it off.

SHARK: Shut up, Black Boy. I don't take orders from any Jim Crow.

SHORTHORN: (Moving quickly toward SHARK) The only thing that ain't white about John Ware is his skin, Shark. You're going to remember that. I'm going to make you remember it.

SHARK: Twenty years ago you didn't use your fists, did you, Weston?

SHORTHORN: Fists will do this job.

NIGGER JOHN: (Moving in.) Stop it, Shorthorn. Stop it.

SHORTHORN: You don't have to take that, from anybody.

NIGGER JOHN: (For the first time the full strength and power of the man's personality is indicated. Authority takes the place of gentleness.) I'll fight my own battles. (He pulls SHORTHORN back). You and Bud go on. You hear me. Go now. I'm asking you.

SHORTHORN: All right, John, just as you say. Come on, Bud. (They go out).

SHARK: He'll never get a chance at that fancy horse of yours. I'll fix the double-crossing bastard------

NIGGER JOHN: You make any trouble for Shorthorn and I'll kill you, Shark.

SHARK: You haven't got the guts.

NIGGER JOHN: Don't try me, that's all. Get out.
(Ma comes in to put away some dishes as SHARK leaves).

MA: What's the trouble, John?

NIGGER JOHN: Nothing, --nothing, Ma.

MA: Ceeley says Bud was hurt today. Bad?

NIGGER JOHN: Enough that he wouldn't have a chance tomorrow. Shorthorn's going in on Midnight.

MA: Shorthorn? Well, I'll be damned. He's too old for bronc-riding, ain't he, John?

NIGGER JOHN: I'm afraid he is. He don't care enough about making his mark now.

MA: You must be proud of Midnight, John.

NIGGER JOHN: No, Ma, I'm just sorry. Midnight trusted me and now he's been hurt, deeper than his skin, deeper than any spur can rake him.

MA: He'll be famous.

NIGGER JOHN: Yeah, he'll be famous, cause there's nothing can hurt him any more. He's got a good clean hate inside him and he don't figure there's a man living he could carry on his back without lowering himself.

MA: If you could buy him from Tilson and keep him quiet for a while------

NIGGER JOHN: Not now. From now on papers is the only part of Midnight anybody will ever own. You see he knows now what he was always afraid of, he knows that man's got a mean streak in him, a queer, twisted mean streak that likes to hurt, to turn the knife. They've made an outlaw of him and he's on his road. He'll be the greatest bucking horse that was ever born, but he won't trust anybody ever again.

SLIM: (Entering) Did Lonesome come back here, Ma?

MA: They're upstairs, Slim.

SLIM: I've looked in every saloon in town. Hey, Lonesome! Lonesome!

LONESOME: (From upstairs) Hi, Slim. We'll be right down.

MA: Shorthorn's going in on Midnight tomorrow, Slim. Bud broke a rib today.

SLIM: Well doggone! Still, if anybody can ride Midnight, it's Shorthorn.

NIGGER JOHN: I think you're right, Slim.
(Lonesome and Pete come down the stairs).

SLIM: You fellows run out on me.

LONESOME: We looked around and you weren't there any more. You were gone--vanished.

SLIM: I was talking to a pretty girl.

LONESOME: What are you doing here then?

SLIM: She went off with a drug-store cowboy, chaps four inches deep and three pounds of bead work.

LONESOME: See that roll, Ma? That's my wages all saved up so I can take that train and ride home in style. Going to double it tonight.

MA: You better leave that roll with me.

SLIM: If Shark's playing I'm not sitting in. He's too good for me.

LONESOME: Not me. I'll take him to the cleaners.

NIGGER JOHN: Use your head, nesome. How do you think Shark got his name?

PETE: Shark? His mother never give it to him. That man was suckled by a she-wolf and raised by a bear.
(LARRY comes down, trying to be unobtrusive)

LARRY: Well, good night everybody.

SLIM: Hey, he's going somewhere. Smell that eau de cologne.

PETE: What's your hurry, Larry?

SLIM: Here, let me fix your collar. You want to wear my red handkerchief?

LARRY: You don't think it would be too much?

SLIM: Course not, would it, Pete?

PETE: Just harmonizes. Now, boys, don't he look nice, real nice?

SLIM: Going to dance off with some little filly's heart.

LARRY: Why, thanks, fellows. Well, guess I better hit the trail.

PETE: Do you know your steps? Can you swing your lady?

SLIM: We better make sure. Come on Larry, Dosey Do.
Strike up the band, Lonesome.
(Lonesome plays and calls the dance. SLIM, PETE, start with LARRY and pull MA in as they dance.)

LONESOME: Join your hands and circle to the left,
Circle right back, swing your pard.
And lady on left, right to Pard and
Grand right and Left -- meet your pard and promenade away.

First gent swing the
Now the one right over there,
Now the one with the curly hair,
Now the bell of the ball room. (Swing)
Everybody swing and Promenade all.

PETE: Yippee!

MA: No more. I'm out of breath and my feet hurt. (She sits down.)

PETE: Here, Larry, let me tuck your shirt in. Too much blouse aint fashionable. (As he tucks in the shirt he quickly pins a lace doily or antimacassar just below LARRY'S belt at rear.) Isn't he handsome, Ma?

MA: Just like a Christmas tree.

SLIM: Have a good time now, and don't get in any trouble.

LARRY: Good night, Mrs. Raybourne. See you later, fellows. (As LARRY turns the lace doily flutters daintily behind).

PETE: Goodbye, goodbye, my double-jawed hyena.

LONESOME: (Singing)
He's a double-jawed hyena,
He's the villain of the scene,
He can snatch a man bald-headed while he waits.

PETE: (Basso) While he waits. (LARRY goes out).

MA: Slim that was a pole-cat thing to do.

PETE: We'll buy you another little old lace doily, Ma'am.
SLIM: We got to toughen up these lavender cowboys, Ma.
MA: (Getting up). I suppose so. Now don't you make a lot of racket coming in tonight. That means you too, Lonesome.

LONESOME: Why I never made much noise last night, Ma. I was a mouse, a little tiny mouse.

MA: Uh huh. That's the reason you were going up and down the hall on all fours eh? (She goes into the kitchen).

SLIM: Well, let's get going. Come along, Nigger John.

NIGGER JOHN: No thanks, Slim.

LONESOME: Wait, I forgot my rabbit's foot. I can't play poker lest I have my rabbit's foot. If I've lost that -- (he starts upstairs)

SLIM: Help him find it, Pete, or we'll never get started.

PETE: Right. (Pete follows LONESOME).

LONESOME: (On the stairs, singing) Rye whiskey, rye whiskey, rye whiskey, I cry.

PETE: (Joining in). If I don't have rye whiskey, I surely will die.

LONESOME: (Singing first line.) Oh baby, oh baby, don't spit on the floor.

PETE: (Responding) What do you think that a cuspidor's for? (Or some other variation)
(LONESOME and PETE go off upstairs.)

SLIM: They've got a jag on already. I'm coming home early. I want to rope tomorrow. (SHORTHORN AND BUD come in).

SHORTHORN: (There is weariness in his voice and manner) It's all fixed up, John, -- me and Midnight at 2:45 tomorrow. I'm sorry Bud.

BUD: (Sullenly) I'm sorry, too. Looks like you were all mighty frightened I'd take the honors.

NIGGER JOHN: Take it easy, Bud.
(CELIA comes in. She has changed to a pretty summer frock).

CELIA: Bud --

BUD: Well, I'm out of it, Ceeley. Are you happy now?

CELIA: Oh no, Bud. You know I didn't want --

BUD: That makes two of us. Bud Walker, the boy wonder, thought he had the world by the tail, thought he could ride, thought -- (he stops). Gosh, I -- I feel kind of faint. (He sits down). Maybe I better --

CELIA: Bud ---

SLIM: Here, Shorthorn. (He produces a bottle).

SHORTHORN: Drink this, boy. (Bud drinks).

BUD: I'm all right, Ceeley. I just.---

SHORTHORN: (Sharply) You're going to bed, boy, you hear. You were hurt and you need rest. Now quit fighting and get up there.

NIGGER JOHN: Come on, son.

BUD: I'm all right, I tell you. (But he allows NIGGER JOHN to help him upstairs. CELIA follows).

LONESOME: (Coming down, flattens himself against the wall to let them by). Too early for that, Bud. Look at me, I'm still sober. You want to borrow my rabbit's foot?

NIGGER JOHN: Go on, Lonesome. (They go up).

LONESOME: (Coming down). Unfriendly, that's what they are, unfriendly. I'm going home and see my girl. (He sings)
Eyes like the morning star,
Cheeks like a rose,
Laura was a pretty girl,
God Almighty knows. (He chalks up 98)

Hi, Shorthorn. We're going out to raise a ruckus. Want to come? (SHORTHORN has watched the others go upstairs and is standing quietly, his face in the shadows).

SHORTHORN: No thanks, Lonesome.

PETE: (Coming down) We're going to paint the old town red. You better come. (He sees the score) Ninety-eight! You been cheating, Lonesome.

LONESOME: I did so sing a song, didn't I?

SLIM: He did, Pete.

PETE: What was it?

LONESOME: I forget now. Oh yes, it was about my girl. (Singing) Eyes like the morning star-- (He breaks off) Shorthorn, you ain't with us. You look far off, like an outrider on a hill all by himself.

SLIM: He's thinking about that new ranch. (He puts on his hat).

LONESOME: Dreaming of his first round-up. Why, in ten years you fellows will have so many cattle they'll tromp down the Rocky Mountains in one night's grazing.

SHORTHORN: (With an ironic little smile) Yeah, wolf of the world, boys -- that's me, the wolf of the world.

SLIM: Let's ramble.

LONESOME: (As they go). Got my roll, got my rabbit's foot, got my hat. Yippee! (SLIM, LONESOME and PETE leave.)

NIGGER JOHN: (Coming down the stairs) He's just worn out, that's all.

SHORTHORN: He thinks I double-crossed him.

NIGGER JOHN: I never thought about you riding.

SHORTHORN: I didn't either, John, but that was the only way he'd withdraw. I did it for Ceeley. You see, Ceeley and Bud----

NIGGER JOHN: I know, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: It's better that way, John. I reckon Shark's got my number. And if he's dug up the whole story, he'll use it, John. Can't say I blame him either.

NIGGER JOHN: Don't worry about Shark tonight, Shorthorn. You get some sleep. You got to ride tomorrow.

SHORTHORN: You going out?

NIGGER JOHN: Over to the stables. I want to take a look at Midnight.

SHORTHORN: I won't hurt him, John.

NIGGER JOHN: I'm not afraid of that, Shorthorn. Good night. (He puts his hand on SHORTHORN'S arm for a moment, then turns.)

SHORTHORN: Good night, John. (NIGGER JOHN goes)

(CELIA comes downstairs.)

CELIA: You haven't much light here, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: That's all right, Ceeley, I ain't used to much light.

CELIA: Bud will be all right, won't he?

SHORTHORN: Of course he will, all he needs is three days to rest up. You make a mighty handsome couple, little Ceeley.

CELIA: I told you something wonderful was going to happen, didn't I? I'm glad it's you that's taking his place, Shorthorn. I've heard them all talk about the way you used to ride.

SHORTHORN: (It is as if he was trying to make some confession, to get rid of an inner burden.) Ceeley, did you ever hear of a fellow named Weston--Charlie Weston--?

CELIA: No.

SHORTHORN: Way before your time, I guess. He wasn't a bad sort, Ceeley. He wanted to do the right thing, but he got into some trouble. It was like a shadow walking with him for twenty years. He-- (He stops, realizing that CELIA isn't listening.) Oh, let it go.

CELIA: Oh, I'm sorry. I wasn't listening. I was thinking of something else.

SHORTHORN: It doesn't matter. It's just an old tale, of something that happened a long time ago. It doesn't matter any more.

CELIA: Listen, Shorthorn. (From outside comes a whistled refrain) That's Lonesome's song. (CELIA sings "Eyes like the morning star" softly)

SHORTHORN: (As she sings he moves away from her. Finally he turns and breaks into the song. His voice is low and tortured). For God's sake, Ceeley, leave me alone. Go on, go on now and leave me alone.

CURTAIN.

STAMPEDE

ACT III

SCENE: An enclosure just off the chutes at the Stampede Grounds. A path leading towards the Grand Stand runs across the front of the stage from left to right. A high board fence angles across from down left to left of centre. A break in the fence indicates the way out to the chutes. A similar fence runs along the back with a break near the right corner, entering towards the stables. The wall of a frame building runs along from down right to up right.

TIME: The last afternoon of the Stampede.

At the opening of the act the music continues as if it were a band off stage playing for the opening of the Stampede.

There is the sound and laughter of a crowd. LONESOME is asleep on a cot near the fence at back. No one notices him.

VOICE: (Off stage.) Souvenirs of the Stampede! Last chance folks. Last chance for a souvenir of the Old West.

(Several people hurry on to the stage carrying pennants balloons, noisemakers, etc.)

A MAN: They stable the horses back there.

WOMAN: Somebody said Midnight broke out of his stall three times last night.

MAN: I don't envy the bronc-buster who draws him.

VOICE: (Off stage.) Get your seats for the Musical Ride, folks. Get your seats for the world's greatest musical ride.

POLICEMAN: Move along, now, move along. You aren't supposed to use this thoroughfare. Move along to the Grandstand.

CHILD: But Daddy, why can't you ride a wild steer?

MAN: Because I can't, that's all.

WOMAN: Be quiet, Gilbert. Your father doesn't want to ride a wild steer.

CHILD: But why? Why doesn't he want to?

(SLIM enters and takes his rope down from the board fence.)

CHILD: I bet he can ride a wild steer.

SLIM: Nothing to it, son. You just get on and stay on -- if you can.

CHILD: You see, I knew he could. I wish he was my Daddy.

MAN: You're going to wish it a lot more in a minute, if you don't be quiet. Come on.

(The small family goes out.)

(LOLLIE and BERTIE come in, burdened down with souvenirs.)

LOLLIE: Oh Bertie, this is practically back-stage, isn't it? Such a horsey smell.

BERTIE: Watch this fellow. Some roper, eh?

(SLIM is doing some simple rope tricks. The music continues off stage. SAL, a cowgirl dressed for riding, comes through.)

SAL: Hi, Slim! Giving a show?

SLIM: No, just limbering up. What time you riding, Sal?

SAL: Right away. The Grandstand's filling up now. (She goes off to stables.)

PEANUT VENDOR: (Passing through towards the Grandstand.) Peanuts! Fresh, roasted peanuts! Can't watch the Stampede without 'em, Folks. Get your fresh roasted peanuts. Can't watch the Stampede without 'em.

BERTIE: Come on, Lollie. We better have some of those. (They follow the Vendor out.)

VOICE:: (Off stage) Grandstand tickets! Get your seats folks, for the big show. Watch the world's greatest Musical Ride.

(There is a burst of music off stage. NIGGER JOHN comes in from the stables. He doesn't see LONESOME but moves directly over to SLIM.)

NIGGER JOHN: Have you seen Shorthorn, Slim?

SLIM: No. Ain't he here?

NIGGER JOHN: I haven't seen him today.

SLIM: You ain't worryin', John?

NIGGER JOHN: I don't know. Funny he's not here by now.

SLIM: He wasn't drinkin' last night?

NIGGER JOHN: No.

SLIM: I'll take a look around. (He sees LONESOME.) Who's that?

NIGGER JOHN: (Moving over to the sleeping figure.) Why, it's Lonesome-- Hey, Hey, Lonesome, Wake up Boy. Come on now, wake up.

SLIM: Passed out eh? (NIGGER JOHN nods.) He sure had a load on when I left him last night.

NIGGER JOHN: You go on, Slim, see what you can find out about Shorthorn. I'll take care of Lonesome.

SLIM: See you later, then. (He starts off, then turns.) How's Midnight acting, John?

NIGGER JOHN: Strung up like a thread of lightning.

SLIM: Going to be a tough ride eh?

NIGGER JOHN: Yeah, it sure is. (SLIM goes.) (NIGGER JOHN shakes LONESOME gently.) Come on, Lonesome, rouse yourself. Wake up, now.

LONESOME: What is it Mom? What do you want?

NIGGER JOHN: It ain't your Ma, Lonesome. It's just me--Nigger John.

LONESOME: I'm all right, Mom. Don't you worry about me none.

NIGGER JOHN: You want some coffee, son?

LONESOME: (Rousing.) Look, you, go away. Leave me alone. I'm going home, see. And you can't come. You got to find your own home, you hear. There's plenty of homes to go round. All I got to do is to find mine and then I won't be lonesome no more. (He tries to sing.) 'I'm a poor lonesome cowboy, a poor lonesome cowboy..... (His voice trails off and he sinks back into a stupor.)

NIGGER JOHN: You sure got a skinful of red eye, didn't you, boy? I'll bring some cold water.

LONESOME: (Sinking back.) I don't feel very good, Ma. I must have ate something.

(As NIGGER JOHN turns to go out toward the stables, a U. S. Marshall comes in from the right.)

MARSHALL: Hello, John Ware.

NIGGER JOHN: How are you, Marshall?

MARSHALL: Can't complain. When you coming to visit us over in God 's country?

NIGGER JOHN: May be down in the spring buying cattle, Marshall. You can't tell.

MARSHALL: John, do you know a fellow named Shark Lester?

NIGGER JOHN: (After a tiny pause.) Yeah, I know him.

MARSHALL: Seen him around?

NIGGER JOHN: No,---no, I haven't. Not right lately. Why? Do you want Shark?

MARSHALL: No--that is, I just want a talk with him. Seems he's got some dope on an old case of ours.

NIGGER JOHN: I see.

MARSHALL: If you see him, tell him I'll be over below the judging stand.

NIGGER JOHN: I'll tell him, Marshall.

MARSHALL: Thanks. (He waves an acknowledgment toward NIGGER JOHN and goes off left.)

(NIGGER JOHN watches him go thoughtfully. LONESOME stirs and moans.)

LONESOME: Oh...my head. I want a drink of water....

NIGGER JOHN: (Turning.) I'm getting it, Lonesome. (He goes off back.)

(NIGGER JOHN goes out back stage right. BEANIE enters with WHITE CALF in full chief's regalia.)

BEANIE: (A brash young man in a loud suit, bow tie and straw hat.) Here's the angle, White Calf. We walk around in the crowd and I do the talking. All you have to do is shake hands and look noble. I handle the pic-, tures and the money. Check? (WHITE CALF nods.) Double check. I'll get the pictures. (He starts off, then turns, snaps his fingers.) Idea! Give them the old lingo, White Calf -- "Heap big chief glad to smoke pipe with Pale Face." Can you say that?

WHITE CALF: Hmm. I try.

BEANIE: (Almost off stage.) Wait, got a better idea! We'll give them the old Tecumseh. Can you say "How are you" in Indian?

WHITE CALF: Canni mucki-nistis?

BEANIE: Sure, sure. That's wonderful, excellent. That's good.

WHITE CALF: (Smiling a little.) Exsokopi.

BEANIE: Now we're hitting the old target. Their quarters will fall out like sunflower seeds. Be right back. (He goes out.)

(WHITE CALF sits down. NIGGER JOHN returns with a couple of towels and some water.)

NIGGER JOHN: (Giving LONESOME a drink and placing a towel on his head.) Here you are, Lonesome. Come on, boy, rise and shine. (He sees WHITE CALF.) Why, hello, White Calf.

WHITE CALF: Hello, John.

NIGGER JOHN: This boy's going to have a hard day.

WHITE CALF: Sick?

NIGGER JOHN: No. Got awful drunk last night.

WHITE CALF: Maksokopi.

NIGGER JOHN: (Leaving towel on LONESOME's head, he comes over to WHITE CALF. They shake hands.) How are things going?

WHITE CALF: (With a shrug.) Sometimes good, sometimes bad.

NIGGER JOHN: Smoke? (They roll cigarettes.) You making any money?

WHITE CALF: Few dollars. Buy new dress, coats for kids. Candy. (After a pause.) My wife, she's sick. (He taps his chest.) Cough all the time. Bad.

NIGGER JOHN: I'm sure sorry, White Calf.

WHITE CALF: I get some medicine over here. They say it cure my wife, sure.

NIGGER JOHN: I hope so, White Calf. Don't let this fellow cheat you now.

WHITE CALF: (Smiling.) Little man, big talk. Talk, talk, talk--can't stop. (LONESOME groans.) He wake up eh?

(LOLLIE and BERTIE reappear. NIGGER JOHN returns to LONESOME. LOLLIE speaks in a shrill voice.)

LOLLIE: Oh Bertie, Bertie, look at the Indian!

BERTIE: Say, he's really decked out, isn't he?

BEANIE: (Returning, he seizes the opportunity at once.) Howdy, folks. How would you like to shake hands with a genuine chief of the fierce Blackfoot, Chief White Calf, whose head was engraved on the American nickel. Souvenir picture--only fifty cents. Step right up. Shake hands with a genuine Indian warrior. Don't be scared, shake his hand, lady, shake his hand.

BERTIE: Go ahead, Lollie, if you want to.

LOLLIE: (Giggling.) Oh dear, I wonder--well, might as well try anything once, eh Bertie? How do you do, Chief White Calf.

WHITE CALF: Canni muckinistis?

LOLLIE: And it's your head on the American nickel. Just imagine that. That's a great honour isn't it, a very great honour. (To BERTIE, giggling.) As if he could understand me.

BERTIE: I'll interpret. Pale Face Lady say White Calf heap big chief eh? (He uses awkward signs and speaks as if to a deaf person.

WHITE CALF: Ugh.

LOLLIE: Oh Bertie, he's smiling. You've pleased him. You are clever.

BERTIE: I can always talk to anybody with ears. You want one of these? (He indicates the pictures.)

LOLLIE: I'd simply love it. It will be a souvenir--a real souvenir of a perfect afternoon.

BEANIE: There you are, sir, only fifty cents.

(There is a surge of music from off stage. A small crowd hurries through with noise makers, balloons, etc. A vendor passes through with the crowd.)

LOLLIE: (Looking off towards the grandstand.) Oh Bertie, Bertie, the cowgirls are riding in--we mustn't miss them. Hurry! (BERTIE gets his change and he and LOLLIE lope off.)

VENDOR: Grandstand tickets, folks. See the greatest exhibition of Bronc Riding ever seen on the North American Continent. Wild calf roping, saddle bronc riding, thrills and danger. Get your tickets for this hair raising, thrill packed show of death defying horsemanship. See Midnight in Action--the black horse that nobody can ride. Grandstand tickets, folks. (He passes out toward the Grandstand.)

BEANIE: (Interrupting the crowd as much as possible.) Step right up and shake hands with Chief White Calf, a

BEANIE: (continued.) genuine Vanished American. Souvenir pictures of a scalp-collecting full-blooded Blackfoot only fifty cents.

(MA enters with the crowd. Today she is very grand in silver fox furs, ostrich plumed hat, diamonds and velvet. She pauses near WHITE CALF.)

BEANIE: Come on, Ma'am. Shake hands with the fire-eating chief of the ---

MA: Hello, White Calf. How are you anyway. Long time since I saw you.

WHITE CALF: Mrs. Raybourne.

MA: You haven't changed a bit, White Calf.

WHITE CALF: I remember your man. He was good rider.

MA: You bet he was -- none better. Well, don't take any wooden nickels. (She moves on.)

BEANIE: (Indignantly.) Look, White Calf, you got to stop recognizing everybody and shaking hands free. It ain't business like. Be more noble, get it. Come on we'll follow the crowd. (He pushes WHITE CALF out left.)

MA: (As the rest leave.) Well, John, this is the big day. Where's Shorthorn?

NIGGER JOHN: I wish I knew. Slim's gone to look for him.

MA: He was out before breakfast. I've got to meet Bud and Ceeley. Give Shorthorn this for me, will you?

NIGGER JOHN: Sure, Mrs. Raybourne.

MA: It's my old man's luck charm. He always wore it when he rode. I never give it to anybody before.

NIGGER JOHN: I'll give it to him, Ma.

MA: Is that Lonesome?

NIGGER JOHN: Yeah. He'll be all right, Ma. He's coming round now.

MA: I'll be back after I find those young folks.

NIGGER JOHN: Good. (He turns back to LONESOME.) Hey, Lonesome.

LONESOME: Say, what is this place?

NIGGER JOHN: You're out at the grounds, boy.

LONESOME: How'd I get here?

NIGGER JOHN: Reckon you lost yourself last night, Lonesome. A while ago you thought you were back in Iowa.

LONESOME: (With much effort.) I remember. I couldn't find Ma Raybourne's house anywhere. I kept walking into all the wrong places and then they'd throw me out. Finally I thought about that little old calf I was trying to rope yesterday. I was going to make friends with him before I bought my ticket. I got to buy my ticket

LONESOME: (continued.) right away. (He sits up quickly, tries to get to his feet. His hand goes to his pocket! After a moment he turns to NIGGER JOHN in a panic.) Nigger John, Nigger John -- my money, I ain't got it any more. It's gone.

NIGGER JOHN: Look in your other pocket, boy.

LONESOME: (Quickly, emptying all his pockets.) No, no, it ain't there. It's gone. My money's gone.

NIGGER JOHN: (Gently.) Did somebody roll you, boy?

LONESOME: They must have. No, wait. (He slowly pieces together what happened.) I was winning and then, then I had a streak of bad luck. That was after Slim left. And Shark sat there smiling and I got mad and put down the whole roll. I must have -- yeah, I lost. Oh God, I'm broke, dead broke.

NIGGER JOHN: You sure you haven't got it, Lonesome?

LONESOME: No, I lost the whole roll. I'm right back where I was before. (After a pause, in a flat, convinced tone.) I can't go home now. I won't ever go home again. I just know it.

NIGGER JOHN: I'll lend you the money, Lonesome. You can pay me back when you --

LONESOME: No. I ain't going home on borrowed money, John. That ain't how I planned it. Why, I was going to make a splash at home ---

NIGGER JOHN: Come on, we'll find a cup of coffee. Maybe we can figure something.

(SLIM enters.)

SLIM: I didn't run across him, John. He was in the Alberta a couple of hours ago, though.

NIGGER JOHN: Thanks, Slim. Lonesome and I will see what we can do. He'll have to check in pretty soon. He's first up.

(NIGGER JOHN and LONESOME go out left. SLIM takes down his saddle from a hook on the wall and begins polishing it up a bit. PETE comes in from the stables.)

PETE: Hello, Slim. Where is everybody?

SLIM: Watching the cowgirls do their show, I reckon. Well, I figure to rope and tie in 17 seconds flat today. Anybody entered from your bunch?

PETE: Big Tom and Johnny Hall.

SLIM: I don't know about Johnny. I'm faster than Big Tom, though. (BUD comes in from the grandstand.) Hi, Bud, How are you feeling?

BUD: I'm all right.

PETE: Too bad you can't ride today. You were right up in the top bracket.

BUD: I'll get over it, I guess.

SLIM: Have you seen Shorthorn?

BUD: No.

PETE: Some of the boys tell me Shark's on the tear, talking all over about he's going to fix Shorthorn.

BUD: He's got no call to be sore.

SLIM: Guess he figured he'd be in there today if it wasn't for Shorthorn.

BUD: I'd have been in there, you mean. But Shorthorn put the pressure on ---

SLIM: Forget it, Bud. You couldn't ride.

PETE: Sure, what's the difference? I'm glad the stampede's about over anyway. I'm broke, I got a hangover and I'm tired of people.

(Two young women cross the stage, they are dressed in the extreme of fashion and are rather heavily made up.)

SLIM: Hmmm. Nice eyes, eh? (He throws a rope which settles round the girls and their feet become somewhat entangled.)

I beg your pardon, Ladies, I don't know what come over me. I'm not usually so awkward with my rope. Allow me. (He disentangles them.)

GIRL: You did that on purpose. I know you did.

OTHER GIRL: You might have killed us.

SLIM: Why, Ma'am---

GIRL: Don't bother explaining. Come along, Daisy.
(The two girls start off, but DAISY pauses to drop her handkerchief. SLIM picks it up and returns it with elaborate courtesy.)

SLIM: Excuse me, your handkerchief, Miss Daisy.

OTHER GIRL: Oh, how stupid. Thank you, thank you very much.

GIRL: Daisy! (They go out.)

SLIM: Well, boys, looks like my last evening may not be so dull anyway. Pardon me while I arrange a rendez-vous.

PETE: Don't forget you got a rendez-vous to rope a steer in about fifteen minutes.

SLIM: I'll be back. I may want to borrow some money.

PETE: You had a hundred dollars last night. Where's it gone?

SLIM: Well I bought the drinks for the house at the Alberta, that was thirty dollars. Then I bought the drinks at Pete's -- twenty dollars. About four a.m. I bought a round for everybody at the Palace -- another twenty bucks.

PETE: Still leaves thirty dollars. What did you do with it?

SLIM: Gosh, you know I don't remember. I must have spent that other twenty bucks foolish-like. See you later, boys. (He goes out after the young ladies.)

PETE: Wonder where Lonesome is.

BUD: Haven't seen him.

PETE: Guess I'll take a gander around. You coming? (He starts off left.)

BUD: No. I'm going over to the stables. (He leaves as two very young ladies come in wide-eyed.)

SUZANNE: Oh, Betsy, there's one now. Stop him.

BETSY: I don't dare. What would Aunt Abigail say?

SUZANNE: She wouldn't know. Come on, let's see what's back here.

BETSY: Suzanne. That's bold!

Suzanne; I don't care. I'm just peeking. (She pulls BETSY with her and they stand together looking over the board fence.)

(LARRY comes in, absorbed in trying to twirl a rope. He is doing it rather badly.)

BETSY: (Turning.) Suzanne, look.

SUZANNE: He's doing rope tricks.

BETSY: Isn't he wonderful. Ask him, Suzanne.

SUZANNE: La, I never did speak to a strange man before, let alone a cowboy.

BETSY: We'll never have another chance.

SUZANNE: Stay right by me then. (They advance toward LARRY.) Mr. Cowboy ----

LARRY: Beg pardon, was there something I could do for you, Ma'am?

SUZANNE: We wondered if you'd give us your autograph. We're from the East and we've never seen a real cowboy before.

LARRY (Swelling.) Glad to oblige, Ma'am.

SUZANNE: Just write whatever you feel like.

LARRY: Ridin' and shootin' is a bit more my line than writin', Ladies, but I'll do what I can.

BETSY: (As LARRY writes.) You must have had some wonderful adventures.

LARRY: (Modestly.) Oh, nothing outstanding. I've met up with a few tough hombres in my time, but luckily I'm pretty fast on the draw.

SUZANNE: Just imagine, Betsy.

LARRY: (Handing back the books.) There you are, ladies. Hope that fills the bill.

SUZANNE: "All good wishes from Larry, the Kid." Oh, thank you.

BETSY: "Ever thine, Larry, the Kid." (Transported.) Oh.....

SUZANNE: You couldn't tell us just one of your experiences.

BETSY: Just a minor incident that you don't mind talking about.

LARRY: Well, I reckon my life ain't hardly been one for purty little ladies to hear about. Bad language, dives, the reek of rum, the smell of gunshot -- it ain't what I'd want you to know about -- then back to the range, ridin', ridin', day after day, -- rattlers, pohelia monsters, grizzlies --

BETSY: Grizzlies. Suzanne! (She sways at the thought.)

LARRY: (Gathering steam.) Mind one time I was riding along on my trusty pony, about two in the morning it was. A storm gathering and the herd restless. Suddenly there was a crash of thunder. The cattle began stampedin'. Balls of lightning flashed from their horns.

(SLIM and PETE enter. On hearing the last sentence, SLIM motions to PETE to be quiet. LARRY or the girls are too absorbed to notice them.)

LARRY: They were heading for a cut-bank. I knew if I couldn't turn them, the whole herd was doomed.

SUZANNE: Oh, how terrible!

LARRY: So I galloped hell for leather towards the lead steer. If I could turn him --- (Turning he sees PETE and SLIM.)

PETE: Yes, sir, boy, if you could turn him --

SLIM: The gal was saved.

PETE: The mortgage lifted.

SLIM: The villain foiled.

PETE: Say you turned him, Larry Boy. (He pleads.)

SLIM: Don't let your old pappy down, Son. You played a man's part didn't you?

LARRY: (Embarrassed.) They're friends of mine, -- always joking.

SUZANNE: Hmmm. They just wish they were real cowboys. Anybody can see that.

BETSY: Some people are always butting in on other people.

LARRY: I was just telling the young ladies here --

SLIM: Don't listen to his purty talk, Gal. He's a tough hombre.

PETE: Hard as nails and twice as stubborn.

SUZANNE: (Ignoring PETE and SLIM.) Can't we go someplace where we could talk?

BETSY: (Shyly.) Maybe -- maybe you'd have a glass of lemonade with us.

LARRY: Thanks, I'd like to very much.

SUZANNE: (As they start off.) Jealousy plays a fool ' s part, as my grandmother says. Come, Betsy.

(They go out, their skirts swishing indignantly. LARRY follows them, wiping his brow.)

PETE and SLIM: (Singing.) (13) (They sing after him.)

Oh a man there lives on the Western plains,
With a ton of fight and an ounce of brains,
Who herds the cows as he robs the trains,
And goes by the name of Larry.

(They call the name after him.)

SLIM: He's certainly having himself a time, isn't he?

PETE: Got those little gals practically swooning.

(PETE and SLIM are laughing as LONESOME and NIGGER JOHN come in.)

PETE: Well! I thought you'd got yourself jailed, Lonesome. We got to finish our contest before you take the train.

LONESOME: Contest's off, Pete.

PETE: Aw, we got up to one hundred and forty-seven. We got to finish.

LONESOME: I can't. Besides, I don't feel like singing, I just want to go off and eat a few worms.

(CELIA and MA come in as he is speaking.)

CELIA: Why, Lonesome, what's the matter?

SLIM: He's got a bad hangover.

LONESOME: Why didn't you lock me up last night, Ma?

NIGGER JOHN: Shark won his last cent in the game.

LONESOME: So I won't be taking the train, Pete.

MA: Oh Lonesome, Lonesome! (There is a mixture of affection and impatience in her tone.

LONESOME: (Dolefully.) I know, I just ain't no good, that's all.

SLIM: Any luck, John?

NIGGER JOHN: No. He ain't been around here all morning. I wonder--

(The band rises very loud for a few seconds. Then a voice over the megaphone comes through.)

MEGAPHONE: Contestants in the Cowboys' Calf Roping Contest please report at the chutes. Contestants in the Cowboys' Calf Roping Contest please----

SLIM: I'm off, boy. I report way over to the other side.

LONESOME: Good luck, Slim.

MA: You be careful now.

NIGGER JOHN: Don't get excited and take your time. Forget all about the people and imagine you're back at the round-up, branding calves.

SLIM: Thanks. See you later. (He starts out. BUD returns meeting him.)

BUD: Good roping, cowboy. (SLIM acknowledges this with a wave and goes off. BUD speaks in a low tone to NIGGER JOHN.) Shorthorn ain't come in yet.

NIGGER JOHN: I know. Take a look over at Ma's will you Bud? I'd go but I'm afraid I'll miss him.

BUD: Yeah. Ceeley, I'll meet you and Ma at the grandstand. You've got your tickets?

CELIA: I have them, Bud. We'll wait for you there. (BUD goes off.) Shall we go, Ma? (NIGGER JOHN moves restlessly back stage and then goes out at the back.)

MA: Might as well. (She looks off left toward the Grand-stand.) You know, Ceeley, when I see thousands of people all bunched up like that, so their faces are just white blurs in space, I get a queer feeling. Like nothing is real, like that's all we are, a little white blur in a fog and one by one we're just blotted out. I do, Ceeley, I feel that.

CELIA: Oh no, Ma. There's more meaning to it than that. I know there is.

MA: Maybe. Well, come on, we better get out where we can see. (As they start out NIGGER JOHN reappears. MA turns to speak to him.) Now stop your worryin' John, Shorthorn will be here in time, you see.

NIGGER JOHN: I hope you're right, Mrs. Raybourne -- (CELIA and MA move off left.)

PETE: Hurry up, Lonesome, we want to be out there cheering for Slim. They say today's calves are heavy and wild.

LONESOME: They're wild all right. Their idea of fun is to get all four feet up in your face and kick.

(PETE and LONESOME go out.) (LARRY, BETSY and SUZANNE come through toward the grandstand.)

BETSY: Aren't you roping this afternoon, Larry?

LARRY: No. You see, my horse, well, my horse he --

SUZANNE: Your horse isn't ill?

LARRY: Oh no, no. My horse is perfectly all right only he's tired, that's all, he's just a little tired.

BETSY: You're so thoughtful Larry. (They go off.)

(SHORTHORN comes in. He looks tired and speaks quietly)

SHORTHORN: Hello, John.

NIGGER JOHN: Shorthorn! Where have you been? You're up at 2.35.

SHORTHORN: I know. I had to -- there were some things I had to do, down town.

NIGGER JOHN: You didn't see Shark?

SHORTHORN: No.

NIGGER JOHN: I've had a man keeping an eye on him, Shorthorn. I don't think he's going to make any trouble.

SHORTHORN: I don't figure on shooting Shark, if that's worrying you, John. (He smiles affectionately at NIGGER JOHN.)

NIGGER JOHN: You checked in?

SHORTHORN: Yeah. Jumped the fence over there. I just have to get my saddle. I'll be right back. I've got to talk to you, John.

(BUD comes in.)

BUD: He's not over at Ma's -- (He sees SHORTHORN.) I was looking for you. John was afraid something might have happened. (He speaks with constraint.)

SHORTHORN: You going to wish me luck, Bud?

BUD: (Tight lipped.) I hope you get whatever you want out of it, that's all.

SHORTHORN: (Biting back.) I'll get what I want, Bud. (He goes off back.)

NIGGER JOHN: What's the matter with you, Bud? Can't you see --

BUD: No. I can't see nothing, except that I ought to be in there fighting it out with Midnight.

NIGGER JOHN: You couldn't ride Midnight. Look at you, you're all stiffened up. You don't have a chance. You go sit down somewhere and think things over. There's a lot of things you don't know about yet. Looks like one of them might be loyalty. You might think about that a while. (BUD goes off right.)

(From a distance a voice comes over the Megaphone and a cheer is heard.)

MEGAPHONE: That was Tom Patterson, folks, who roped and tied in 24 seconds. Next contestant, Slim Randall of the Bar X Y -- Slim Randall.

(SHORTHORN returns.)

SHORTHORN: I drew first out, John.

NIGGER JOHN: If anybody can ride Midnight, you can.

SHORTHORN: I wonder.

NIGGER JOHN: Watch for a little twist he gives after the fourth or fifth jump. That's what usually piles them.

SHORTHORN: I'll watch. I never figured on trying to ride your horse, John. I always felt it'd be sort of dishonourable. He didn't want nobody but you to touch him.

NIGGER JOHN: Midnight ain't my horse now, Shorthorn. I couldn't get near him this morning. He ain't anybody's horse from here on out.

SHORTHORN: You said it'd be that way. I'm sure sorry.

NIGGER JOHN: You got something on your mind, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: Yeah, I want to give you this, John. It's the deed to the Diamond J. I spent the morning fixing it so's Bud can take my share. It'll be you and Bud on the Diamond J, John.

NIGGER JOHN: No.

SHORTHORN: That's the way I want it. That's the way it's got to be, John. It'll be sort of a wedding present for Bud and Ceeley.

NIGGER JOHN: What are you going to do?

SHORTHORN: I ain't figured yet, but I can't stay here. Shark's dug up my whole history and sooner or later it'll catch up with me --

NIGGER JOHN: Shorthorn, there's a U.S. Marshall here from Montana. I know him. Let's go to him and tell your story.

SHORTHORN: No. It's too late now, -- twenty-two years too late. Besides I wouldn't want Ceeley to know --

NIGGER JOHN: Don't you think she'll hear it anyway?

SHORTHORN: I reckon she will. There's something else, John -- I couldn't stand being locked up. I haven't got that kind of guts I guess. You see, that's what I've been running away from all the time.

(There are cheers off stage.)

MEGAPHONE: That was Slim Randall who roped and tied in 17 seconds, folks. Seventeen seconds to rope and tie his calf.

SHORTHORN: Good for Slim.

(PETE and LONESOME come running in.)

LONESOME: Slim made good time. Hello, Shorthorn.

PETE: They're hazing the broncs into the chutes, Shorthorn. You 're going to light your fag on the sun. Midnight's rarin' to go today.

LONESOME: So's Shorthorn rarin' to go. Ten seconds is all it takes. Hang on, Cowboy.

MEGAPHONE: Shorthorn Charlie Woolf on Midnight, report to Chute 1. Tom Three Persons on Cyclone, Chute 2. Johnny Barker on Challenge, Chute 3. Tim Bercuson on Gay Roan, Chute 4. Lucky Al Wilson on Aztec, Chute 5.

(SHORTHORN has taken up his saddle. LARRY rushes in.)

LARRY: Mr. Woolf, Shorthorn, I - I just want to -- (He is at a loss for words and finally just shakes Shorthorn's hand and explodes.) Yippee!

SHORTHORN: Thanks, Larry.

NIGGER JOHN: Ma said to give you this, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: (Looking at it.) Horseshoe Ed's silver dollar. I need it. I sure do.

(CELIA enters.)

CELIA: Good luck, Shorthorn. We'll be watching you ride him.

SHORTHORN: I got to ride him now. So long, little Ceeley. (He touches her cheek gently.)

(BUD enters and goes to SHORTHORN.)

BUD: I come to wish you luck. Good riding, Shorthorn. (They look at one another a moment and shake hands.)

SHORTHORN: You'll ride him next year, Bud.

(SLIM comes in from the chutes as SHORTHORN turns to go out that way.)

SHORTHORN: Say, you did fine, Slim. Puts you right up in the top bracket.

SLIM: I should have done it in sixteen seconds but I got nervous. How do you feel, boy?

SHORTHORN: (For a moment, whether real or assumed, the old touch of heroic gay braggadocio is there.) Wolf of the world, boys -- just clear the way for the wolf of the world.

SLIM: Don't let that black outlaw bust you, now.

SHORTHORN: If he busts me, just plant me where I land.

SLIM: Don't worry, we won't move you. I got to save my strength. (As SHORTHORN turns to go, NIGGER JOHN is standing near the exit to the chutes. He places his hand on Shorthorn's shoulder.)

NIGGER JOHN: You want me to belt you down?

SHORTHORN: No, you watch from here. (Smiling.) What is it you always say to the youngsters when we're breakin' horses?

NIGGER JOHN: Sit deep in the saddle, take a far distant look, and hope to God you land soft. (The lines somehow sum up all the friendship they have shared for a long time.) Good luck -- partner.

(SHORTHORN goes out. The men crowd round the fence. CEELEY and BUD go off.)

MEGAPHONE: The broncs are in the chutes, folks, for the Saddle Bronc Riding Contest. A purse of $500.00 for this contest. Saddle Bronc Riding is probably the most dangerous event of the Stampede. Today's Broncs include the wildest horses of the week's entries.

LARRY: They're having trouble with Cyclone.

SLIM: He's a veteran at making trouble. Watch that Midnight rear.

MEGAPHONE: In this contest the rider must keep the rein in one hand, the free hand must be kept floating at least 18 inches away from the horse. Both feet must remain in the stirrups and move in a kicking motion throughout the ride.

PETE: Sounds easy, don't it?

LONESOME: I'd sooner ride a tiger than any of them broncs.

LARRY: Shorthorn can ride him. My uncle says --

MEGAPHONE: Charlie Woolf's waiting to mount Midnight, folks. That's the coal black horse in Chute One that has everybody talking. His first week in the ring and he's bucked off every rider in less than five jumps. Woolf's going to try to stay on him for ten seconds.

SLIM: Ten seconds seems like a long time when you're straddling a tornado.

MEGAPHONE: They've got the saddle on Midnight. They're tightening the flank rope. The horse rears. Woolf waits -- he's mounting, he's up!

LONESOME: Hang on, Boy, Hang on.

MEGAPHONE: Woolf's got the buckshank in his left hand. He pulls his hat down and gives the signal. They've opened the chutes, folks. They're off.

(A cheer goes up. The boys on the stage shout and Yippee.)

SLIM: Stay with him, Shorthorn, stay with him.

MEGAPHONE: Midnight's jumping high, wide and handsome. Look at him twist.

PETE: That horse is a fighting devil. Ride him, Shorthorn. Ride him.

LONESOME: Hang on Cowboy, Yippee! (He and LARRY shout together.)

MEGAPHONE: That's the fourth jump. Watch that black buck, folks. Higher every time. He's jack-knifing. The rider's taking a lot of punishment.

PETE: Four seconds to go.

SLIM: Shorthorn's sure giving him his head.

MEGAPHONE: Sixth jump and seven seconds gone. Three seconds to go --

NIGGER JOHN: Watch him, boy. He's fixing to throw you.

MEGAPHONE: Midnight's reaching for the sun now. Woolf sticks. It's some ride. Nine seconds. The horse rears -- Woolf's still in the stirrups -- There's the gong folks. Ten seconds. Charlie Woolf has stayed on Midnight ten seconds.

NIGGER JOHN: Watch him, Shorthorn!

MEGAPHONE: Look out, Charlie Woolf's been thrown just over the ten second mark. Midnight bucked him off on the ninth jump when he sunswitched. Woolf's taken a hard fall. He's still down -- The Black's off down the field.

SLIM: He's hurt.

PETE: No. No. He's getting up.

MEGAPHONE: It's all right, folks. Woolf's getting to his feet. He looks shaky but he's walking off under his own steam.

MEGAPHONE: (Continued.) What a ride! That was Charlie Woolf riding Midnight for ten seconds -- he's in the running for the purse of $500.00.

NIGGER JOHN: Feel like I'd taken that pounding myself.

LARRY: What'd I say? He's some rider isn't he?

SLIM: He's a great rider, son. And Midnight's a great horse.

PETE: Midnight likes the game now. Nothing can stop him --

NIGGER JOHN: I think that was the hardest ridin' I ever saw.

MEGAPHONE: Johnny Barker is up on Challenge folks. They've belted Barker down. He's mounted and --

(SHORTHORN enters.)

LARRY: Shorthorn. Oh boy, Mr. Woolf, if I could ride like that --

LONESOME: Congratulations, old timer -- Are you all right?

SHORTHORN: I think so. When I get my wind. (He sinks down on the bench at back.) I'm too old to take that though. It was some ride, John, and Midnight tossed me fair and square.

SLIM: You stayed on ten seconds, boy. That's all it takes.

NIGGER JOHN: You stayed on longer than I thought a man could stay.

SHORTHORN: No, he won, even if I stuck it out to the gong. It was him or me and he threw me. In a way I'm not sorry, John. Like you say, he's a proud horse. I don't think anybody will ever ride him in.

(SHARK comes in from the right. He has been drinking. NIGGER JOHN is the first to see him.)

SHARK: (to SHORTHORN.) Ten seconds, eh?

SHORTHORN: That's right.

SHARK: And you rode right straight into a noose.

NIGGER JOHN: Where you going, Shark?

SHARK: Where do you think I'm going? Going to help the law close out one of its files -- an old file on Charlie Weston. You rode Midnight didn't you Weston? Ten seconds. You think you're going to see your name in the paper? You'll see it all right. You're going to read about how Charlie Weston alias Charlie Woolf was arrested as he walked off the grounds. Charlie Weston wanted for a shooting in Texas -- it'll be in the papers all right, all of them, splashed sky high!

NIGGER JOHN: (Moving forward.) Shut up, Shark.

SHARK: I've got the whole story and I've got it for sure this time.

(NIGGER JOHN jumps at SHARK and they struggle.)

NIGGER JOHN: I warned you, Shark. (SHORTHORN tries to pull NIGGER JOHN back.)

SHORTHORN: Stop it, John. John! Stop, I tell you. For God's sake, man, you'll kill him. (He finally pulls NIGGER JOHN back.)

NIGGER JOHN: Yeah. That's just what I'm aiming to do.

SHORTHORN: No. No. Can't you see, that won't help, John. You can't help nothing that way. I ought to know.

PETE: (Examining SHARK.) It's all right. He's still breathing -- but he don't know it.

SHORTHORN: (Turning.) Look, boys. I need six hours. Will you give it to me? What Shark said is true--my name was Weston, twenty years ago. It's up to you. (He looks from one to the other.)

SLIM: (After a slight pause.) Reckon we can give you six hours, Shorthorn. Time's cheap. Why don't you ask for something hard, like money.

SHORTHORN: Time's all I need, Slim. Six hours time. Keep him from talking for that long. Then let him go.

PETE: Come on Lonesome, give me a hand here. If anybody asks, this guy's just passed out, that's all.

(SLIM, PETE and LONESOME take SHARK out.)

LARRY: Shorthorn, was it my fault, telling that story?

SHORTHORN: No. It was just the way the cards was stacked, son, that's all. You go on and enjoy yourself now. I want to talk to John.

(LARRY goes off left. SHORTHORN goes over to take up the saddle he has dropped by the fence.)

SHORTHORN: Well, John, we rode together for a long time.

NIGGER JOHN: How about going on together?

SHORTHORN: No, you're too well-known, John. It wouldn't be safe. Besides, you can look after Ceeley and Bud. Bud's pretty young yet -- help him, John.

NIGGER JOHN: Take my saddle, Shorthorn.

SHORTHORN: Yours? You got the best saddle East of the Rockies --

NIGGER JOHN: Take it.

SHORTHORN: Thanks. I'll hang mine up here. (He goes over and begins to take down NIGGER JOHN'S saddle which is hanging near the rear exit. As SHORTHORN is standing with his back partly turned, the Marshall comes through again.)

MARSHALL: John, have you heard anything about a fellow named Weston? There's a lot of talk going round. He's wanted --

NIGGER JOHN: Yeah, Marshall, I heard the talk. Reckon it's some kid letting his imagination run wild.

MARSHALL: You don't know anything about it then? I've got to check it anyway.

NIGGER JOHN: I knew a Charlie Weston once, Marshall. Down in Montana. But he died about five years ago, maybe more. In Miles City. Pneumonia they said.

MARSHALL: Thanks. That's probably the one. I'll see what I can find out about this story anyway. (He goes out.)

NIGGER JOHN: (Turning.) Reckon you ain't got much time, Boy.

SHORTHORN: No.

MEGAPHONE: Keep your seats, folks. There's been an accident. Al Wilson fell under Aztec. A stretcher is on the way out. Keep yourseats, please.

SHORTHORN: (Looking over the fence.) God, look at that. He don't move. He must be smashed up bad.

NIGGER JOHN: Waste, waste, so's a lot of folks can yell. I just can't see it, that's all.

SHORTHORN: I know. (He moves forward with NIGGER JOHN's saddle.) Look, John, I'm heading North to the Cariboo. That country's just opened up for ranching. Nobody's going to know me there. I reckon I can ride herd for somebody for another ten years, anyway.

NIGGER JOHN: I'll sure miss you.

SHORTHORN: Yeah. I wish ---- I better get moving. Take care of yourself.

NIGGER JOHN: Good luck, Shorthorn. (They shake hands.)

(BEANIE comes in with WHITE CALF.)

BEANIE: Come on White Calf. There'll be a big crowd coming to see if Wilson's been killed or not. I'll milk them.

SHORTHORN: (As he passes WHITE CALF.) Don't get discouraged, White Calf.

BEANIE: (Recognizing SHORTHORN.) Say, cowboy, you're some rider, ain't you?

SHORTHORN: Sure. I'm a ring-tailed wonder. (He turns and looks at NIGGER JOHN affectionately. With a little smile.) The wolf of the world, ain't I, John?

NIGGER JOHN: That's right, boy. You sure are.

BEANIE: Come on, White Calf.

(He moves off stage. WHITE CALF stands quietly at stage left.)

Step right up folks, shake hands with a genuine Vanished American.

SHORTHORN: (Who is now at stage right speaks to NIGGER JOHN who is standing near the back centre.)
So long -- partner.

NIGGER JOHN: So long -- Shorthorn.
(He stands very quietly watching SHORTHORN go. Then slowly takes up the saddle SHORTHORN left on the ground at centre back and hangs it up on the nail where his own had been. As he does so, a voice off stage or a whistle begins the song Doney Gal. One by one more voices join in until they reach a great swell of song which after its climax begins to get farther and farther away. The lights dim until all that can be seen is the rope, saddle and boots that hang on the fence and the dim figures of NIGGER JOHN and WHITE CALF. From afar off the song comes faintly and from a little distance we hear BEANIE.)

BEANIE: Last chance for a souvenir of the old West, folks.
Last chance.

CURTAIN